



In Uniform Style.

ALEXANDRE DUMAS'S THE COUNT OF MONTE-CRISTO,	5 VOLS.
EUGENE SUE'S THE WANDERING JEW,	3 VOLS.
VICTOR HUGO'S LES MISÉRABLES,	5 VOLS.
“ “ TOILERS OF THE SEA,	2 VOLS.
“ “ NÔTRE-DAME,	2 VOLS.
“ “ THE MAN WHO LAUGHS,	2 VOLS.
“ “ NINETY-THREE,	2 VOLS.

Other works in preparation.

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS,
LONDON AND NEW-YORK.

THE WANDERING JEW

BY

EUGENE SUE

*WITH ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-TWO ILLUSTRATIONS FROM DESIGNS
BY A. FERDINANDUS*

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS

LONDON AND NEW-YORK

1889



Copyright, 1888,
By JOSEPH L. BLAMIRE.

A. FERDINANDI & C.

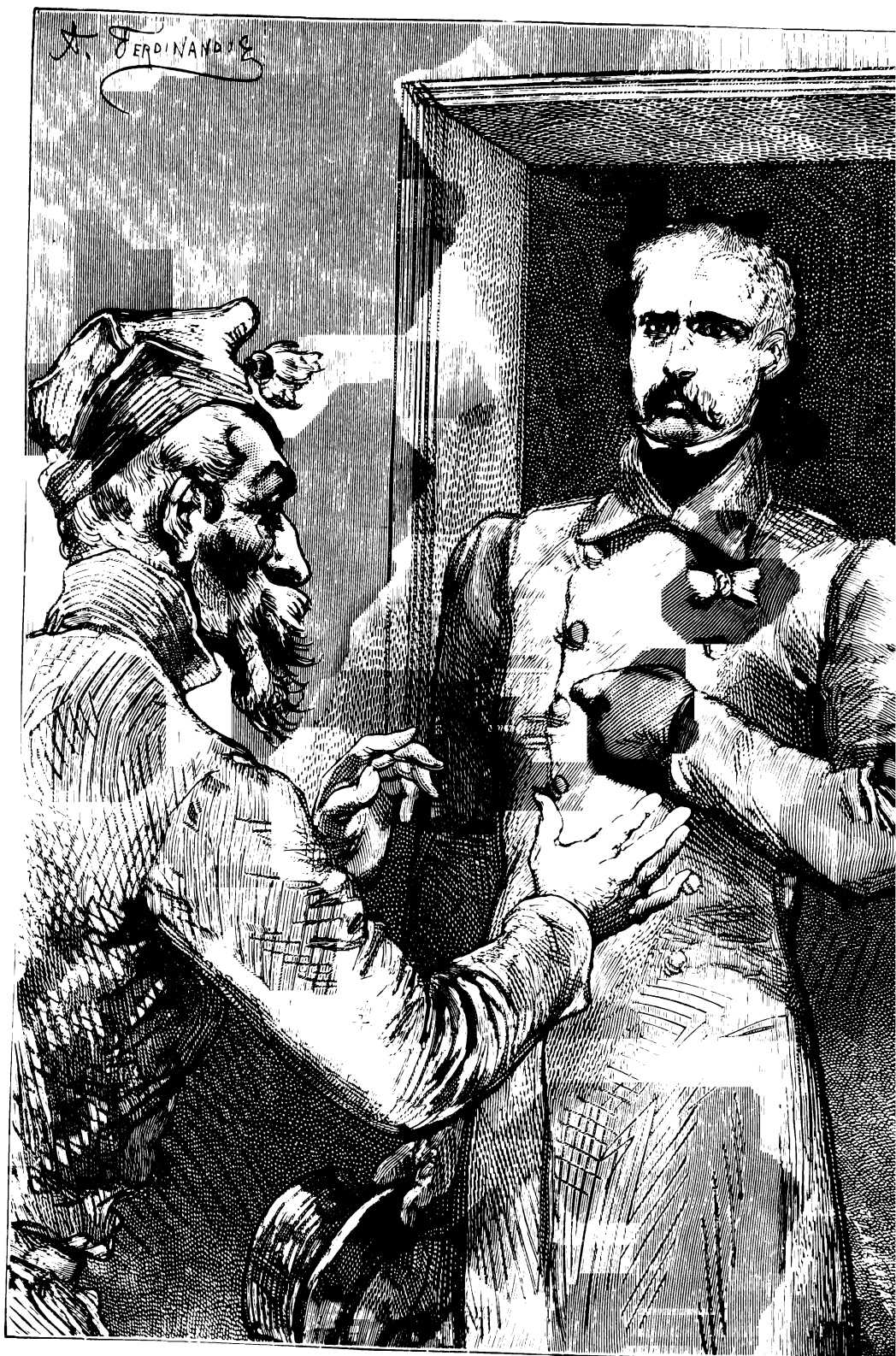


TABLE OF CONTENTS

VOLUME II

PART IX—"THE BACCHANAL QUEEN"

CHAP. I. THE MASQUERADE	1
II. THE CONTRAST	11
III. THE CAROUSE	20
IV. THE FAREWELL	30

PART X—THE CONVENT

CHAP. I. FLORINE	39
II. MOTHER SAINTE-PERPÉTUE	48
III. THE TEMPTATION	60
IV. MOTHER BUNCH AND MADEMOISELLE DE CARDOVILLE	68
V. THE ENCOUNTERS	79
VI. THE MEETING	91
VII. DISCOVERIES	100
VIII. THE PENAL CODE	108
IX. BURGLARY	118
X. THE EVE OF A GREAT DAY	129
XI. THE STRANGLER	139
XII. THE TWO BROTHERS OF THE GOOD WORK	143

PART XI—THE 13TH OF FEBRUARY

CHAP. I. THE HOUSE IN THE RUE SAINT FRANÇOIS	155
II. DEBIT AND CREDIT	161
III. THE HEIR	171
IV. THE RUPTURE	182
V. THE CHANGE	192
VI. THE RED ROOM	201
VII. THE TESTAMENT	208
VIII. THE LAST STROKE OF NOON	214
IX. THE DEED OF GIFT	222
X. A GOOD GENIUS	233
XI. THE FIRST LAST, AND THE LAST FIRST	242

PART XII—RODIN'S PROMISES

CHAP. I. THE STRANGER	255
II. THE DEN	265
III. AN UNEXPECTED VISIT	273
IV. FRIENDLY SERVICES	279
V. THE ADVISER	287
VI. THE ACCUSER	295
VII. FATHER D'AIGRIGNY'S SECRETARY	304
VIII. SYMPATHY	314

PART XIII—A PROTECTOR

CHAP. I. SUSPICIONS	327
II. EXCUSES	335
III. REVELATIONS	345
IV. PIERRE SIMON	354
V. THE EAST INDIAN IN PARIS	362
VI. THE AWAKING	371
VII. DOUBTS	380
VIII. THE LETTER	389
IX. ADRIENNE AND DJALMA	399
X. THE CONSULTATION	407
XI. MOTHER BUNCH'S DIARY	419
XII. THE DIARY, CONTINUED	426
XIII. THE DISCOVERY	435

PART XIV—THE FACTORY

CHAP. I. THE TRYSTING-PLACE OF THE "WOLVES"	441
II. THE COMMON DWELLING-HOUSE	453
III. THE SECRET	464
IV. REVELATIONS	472
V. THE ATTACK	483
VI. THE "WOLVES" AND THE "DEVOURERS"	489
VII. THE RETURN	496

PART XV—RODIN UNMASKED

CHAP. I. THE GO-BETWEEN	505
II. THE SECRET	517
III. THE CONFESSION	522
IV. LOVE	529
V. THE EXECUTION	536
VI. THE CHAMPS-ÉLYSÉES	545
VII. BEHIND THE SCENES	552
VIII. UP WITH THE CURTAIN	559
IX. "DEATH"	565

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

VOLUME II

MARSHAL SIMON AND DAGOBERT	ix
TOASTING THE "CHOLERA"	xv
THE MASQUERADE	9
NINI MOULIN AND ROSE-POMPON	17
THE BACCHANAL QUEEN	25
CEPHYSE AND JACQUES	33
THE WORKMAN	37
THE SUPERIOR OF THE SAINT MARY'S CONVENT	41
DOUBLING THE GUARDS	49
ADRIENNE AND ROSE SIMON	57
MOTHER BUNCH IN THE CONVENT	65
DAGOBERT DISCOVERS THE PRISON HOUSE	73
DAGOBERT TRIES THE PISTOLS	81
AGRICOLA AND THE SOLDIER	89
FATHER LORIOT	97
DAGOBERT IN DR. BALEINIER'S GARDEN	105
AGRICOLA BAUDOIN DISCOVERS ADRIENNE	113
MARIUS DE RENNEPONT	121
DAVID SAMUEL	131
FATHER D'AIGRIGNY AND RODIN	137
FARINGHEA STRANGLES THE SMUGGLER	145
BATHSHEBA	157
D'AIGRIGNY AND GABRIEL RENNEPONT	167
THE <i>Compendium</i>	177
THE JUSTIFICATION OF REGICIDE	183
SAMUEL OPENS THE DOOR	193
THE RED ROOM	203
MARIUS DE RENNEPONT'S WILL	211

DAGOBERT AND D'AIGRIGNY	.
THE CODICIL TO THE WILL	.
A WOMAN APPEARED UPON THE THRESHOLD	.
RODIN AT THE SAINT-DIZIER HOUSE	.
ROSE-POMPON AND MOTHER ARSÈNE	.
NINI MOULIN BECOMES A JOURNALIST	.
RODIN'S SECRET QUARTERS	.
RODIN AND ROSE-POMPON	.
RODIN AND CEPHYSE	.
ADRIENNE AND DR. BALEINIER	.
THE MAGISTRATE CALLED IN	.
M. HARDY	.
A GIRL THINKS OF BEGINNING LIFE	.
ADRIENNE AND MOTHER BUNCH	.
DAGOBERT SURPRISES RODIN	.
RODIN RETURNS DAGOBERT'S "CROSS OF HONOR"	.
JESUITICAL ACTIVITY	.
THE EAST INDIAN IN PARIS	.
"YOU'LL BE FOR THEM A GOD"	.
ADRIENNE'S BED-CHAMBER	.
RODIN LEAVING THE HOTEL SAINT-DIZIER	.
"THUS WOULD I CRUSH MY COWARDLY ENEMIES"	.
ADRIENNE AND DJALMA	.
THE REVOLUTIONARY DAYS OF JULY	.
AGRICOLA AND ANGELA	.
THE ABATTOIR	.
THE TRYSTING-PLACE OF THE "WOLVES"	.
A "DEVOURER"	.
THE COMMON DWELLING-HOUSE	.
FATHER SIMON	.
M. HARDY AND M. DE BLESSAC	.
M. HARDY BETRAYED	.
"THE KING OF ROME"	.
THE COMMUNARD	.
AGRICOLA AND THE "WOLVES"	.
ROSE-POMPON AND NINI MOULIN	.
M. LE COMTE DE MONTBRON	.
THE CONFESSION OF LOVE	.
DJALMA IN WAR	.
M. DE MONTBRON'S LETTER	.
MOROK AND GOLIATH	.
DJALMA AT THE THEATER	.
ROSE-POMPON IN THE BOX	.
DJALMA AND "DEATH"	.



TOASTING THE "CHOLERA."

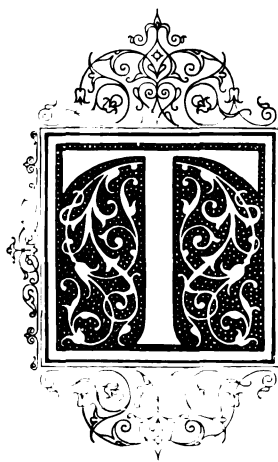
THE WANDERING JEW

PART IX

THE BACCHANAL QUEEN

CHAPTER I

THE MASQUERADE



THE following day to that on which Dagobert's wife was led away by the police before a magistrate, a noisy and animated scene took place on the Place du Châtelet, in front of a building where first floor and basement were used as the bar-rooms of the restaurant named "The Sucking Calf."

A carnival night was dying out.

A number of maskers, grotesquely and shabbily bedecked, had rushed out of the low dance-houses in the quarter of the Hotel de Ville and were roaring out staves of songs as they crossed the Place du Châtelet. But on catching sight of a second troop of mummers running about the water-side, the first party stopped to wait for the others to come up, rejoicing with many a shout, in hopes of one of those verbal battles of slang and ribaldry which made Vadé so illustrious.

This mob, nearly all its members half-seas-over, soon swollen by the many people who have to be up early to follow their crafts, suddenly concentrated in one of the corners of the square, so that a pale, deformed girl, who was going that way, was caught in the human tide.

This was Mother Bunch. Up with the lark, she was hurrying to receive some work from her employer. Remembering how a mob had treated her when she had been arrested in the streets only the day before, by mistake, the poor workgirl's fears may be imagined when she was now surrounded by the revelers against her will. But, spite of all her efforts—very feeble, alas!—she could not stir a step; for the band of merry-makers, newly arriving, had rushed in among the others, shoving some of them aside, pushing far into the mass, and sweeping Mother Bunch—who was in their way—clear over to the crowd around the public-house.

The new-comers were much finer dressed than the others, for they belonged to the gay, turbulent class which goes frequently to the *Chau-mière*, the *Prado*, the *Colisée*, and other more or less rowdy haunts of dancers, made up generally of students, shop-girls, and counter-skippers, clerks, unfortunates, etc., etc.

This set, while retorting the jests of the other party, seemed to be very impatiently expecting some singularly desired person to put in her appearance.

The following snatches of conversation, passing between clowns and columbines, Turks and sultanas, *débardeurs* and *débardeuses*, paired off more or less properly, will give an idea of the importance of the wished-for personage :

“They ordered the spread to be for seven in the morning, so their carriages ought to have come up afore now”

“Yes, but the Bacchanal Queen has got to lead off the last dance in the *Prado*.”

“I wish to thunder I'd known that, and I would have staid there to see her—my beloved Queen!”

“Gobinet! if you call her your beloved Queen again, I'll scratch you! Here's a pinch for you, anyhow!”

“Ow, wow, Celeste! hands off! You are blackening the fine white satin jacket my mamma gave me!”

“Why do you call the Bacchanal Queen your beloved, then? What am I, I'd like to know?”

“You are my beloved, but not my queen, for there is only one moon in the nights of nature, and only one Bacchanal Queen in the nights at the *Prado*.”

“Gobinet's right! the Queen was grand to-night!”

"In prime feather!"

"I never saw her more on the go!"

"And, my eyes! wasn't her dress stunning?"

"Took your breath away!"

"Crushing!"

"Pulverizing!"

"Fulminating!"

"No one but she can get up such dresses."

"And, then, the dance!"

"Oh, yes! it was at once bounding, waving, twisting! There is not such another bayadere under the night-cap of the sky!"

"Gobinet, give me back my shawl directly. You have already spoilt it by rolling it round your great body. I don't choose to have my things ruined for hulking brutes who call other women bayaderes!"

"Celeste, be calm. I am disguised as a Turk, and when I talk of bayaderes, I am only in character."

"Your Celeste is like them all, Gobinet; she's jealous of the Bacchanal Queen ——"

"Jealous!—do you think me jealous? Well, now! that's too bad. If I chose to be as showy as she is they would talk of me as much. After all, it's only a nickname that makes her reputation!—*nickname!*"

"In that you have nothing to envy her—since you are called Celeste!"

"You know well enough, Gobinet, that Celeste is my *real* name."

"Yes; but it's fancied a nickname—when one looks in your face."

"Gobinet, I will put that down to your account."

"And Oscar will help you to add it up, eh?"

"Yes; and you shall see the total. When I carry one, the remainder will not be you."

"Celeste, you make me cry! I only meant to say your celestial name does not go well with your charming little face, which is still more mischievous than that of the Bacchanal Queen."

"That's right; wheedle me now, wretch!"

"I swear by the accursed head of my landlord, that, if you liked, you could spread yourself as much as the Bacchanal Queen—which is saying a great deal."

"The fact is that the Bacchanal has cheek enough, in all conscience."

"Not to speak of her fascinating the police!"

"And magnetizing the magistrates."

"They may get as angry as they please, she always finishes by making them laugh."

"And they all call her Queen!"

"Last night she charmed a cop (as modest as a country girl) whose purity took up arms against the famous dance of the Full-blown Tulip."

"What a quadrille! Sleepinbuff and the Bacchanal Queen, having opposite to them Rose-Pompon and Nini Moulin!"

"And all four making tulips as full-blown as could be!"

"By the bye, is it true what they say of Nini Moulin?"

"What?"

"Why, that he is a writer, and scribbles pamphlets on religion."

"Yes, it is true. I have often seen him at my employer's, with whom he deals; a bad paymaster, but a jolly fellow!"

"And pretends to be devout, eh?"

"I believe you, my boy—when it is necessary; then he is M. Dumoulin, as large as life. He rolls his eyes, walks with his head on one side and his toes turned in; but, when the piece is played out, he slips away, to the balls of which he is so fond. The girls christened him Nini Moulin. Add, that he drinks like a fish, and you have the photo of the fellow. All this doesn't prevent his writing for the religious newspapers; and the saints, whom he lets in even oftener than himself, are ready to swear by him. You should see his articles and his tracts—only see, not read!—every page is full of the devil and his horns, and the desperate fryings which await your impious revolutionists; and then the authority of the bishops, the power of the Pope—hang it! how could I know it all? This toper, Nini Moulin, gives good measure enough for their money!"

"The fact is that he is both a heavy drinker and a heavy swell. How he rattled on with little Rose-Pompon in the dance of the Full-blown Tulip!"

"And what a rum chap he looked in his Roman helmet and top-boots."

"Rose-Pompon dances divinely, too; she has the poetic twist."

"And don't show her heels a bit!"

"Yes; but the Bacchanal Queen is six thousand feet above the level of any common leg-shaker. I always come back to her step last night in the Full-blown Tulip."

"It was lovely!"

"It was divine!"

"If I were father of a family, I would intrust her with the education of my sons!"

"It was that step, however, which offended the cop's modesty."

"The fact is, it was a little free."

"Free as air—so the policeman comes up to her, and says: 'Well, my Queen, is your foot to keep on a-goin' up forever?' 'No, modest war-

rior!' replies the Queen; 'I practice the step only once every evening, to be able to dance it when I am old. I made a vow of it, that you might become an inspector.'

"What a funny girl!"

"I don't believe she will remain always with Sleepinbuff."

"Because he has been a workman?"

"What nonsense! it would precious become us, students and shop-boys, to give ourselves airs! No; but I am astonished at the Queen's fidelity"

"Yes — they've been a team three or four good months."

"She's wild upon him, and he on her."

"They must lead a gay life."

"Sometimes I ask myself where the devil Sleepinbuff gets all the money he spends. It appears that he pays all last night's expenses, three coaches-and-four, and a breakfast this morning for twenty, at ten francs a-head."

"They say he has come into some property. That's why Nini Moulin, who has a good nose for eating and drinking, made acquaintance with him last night—leaving out of the question that he may have some designs on the Bacchanal Queen."

"He! Not he! He's rather too ugly. The girls like to dance with him because he makes people laugh—but that's all. Little Rose-Pompon, who is such a pretty creature, has taken him as a harmless protector in the absence of her student."

"The coaches! the coaches!" exclaimed the crowd all with one voice.

Forced to stop in the midst of the maskers, Mother Bunch had not lost a word of this conversation, which was deeply painful to her, as it concerned her sister, whom she had not seen for a long time. Not that the Bacchanal Queen had a bad heart; but the sight of the wretched poverty of Mother Bunch—a poverty which she had herself shared, but which she had not had strength of mind to bear any longer—caused such bitter grief to the gay, thoughtless girl, that she would no more expose herself to it, after she had in vain tried to induce her sister to accept assistance, which the latter always refused, knowing that its source could not be honorable.

"The coaches! the coaches!" once more exclaimed the crowd, as they pressed forward with enthusiasm, so that Mother Bunch, carried on against her will, was thrust into the foremost rank of the people assembled to see the show

It was indeed a curious sight. A man on horseback, disguised as a postilion, his blue jacket embroidered with silver, an enormous pig-tail

from which the powder escaped in puffs, and a hat adorned with long ribbons, preceded the first carriage, cracking his whip and crying with all his might :

“ Make way for the Bacchanal Queen and her court ! ”

In an open carriage, drawn by four lean horses, on which rode two old postilions dressed as devils, was raised a downright pyramid of men and women, sitting, standing, leaning, in every possible variety of odd, extravagant, and grotesque costume ; altogether an indescribable mass of bright colors, flowers, ribbons, tinsel, and spangles. Amid this heap of strange forms and dresses appeared wild or graceful countenances, ugly or handsome features — but all animated by the feverish excitement of a jovial frenzy — all turned with an expression of fanatical admiration toward the second carriage, in which the Queen was enthroned, while they united with the multitude in reiterated shouts of :

“ Long live the Bacchanal Queen ! ”

This second carriage, open like the first, contained only the four dancers of the famous step of the Full-blown Tulip, — Nini Moulin, Rose-Pompon, Sleepinbuff, and the Bacchanal Queen.

Dumoulin, the religious writer, who wished to dispute possession of Madame de la Sainte-Colombe with his patron, M. Rodin — Dumoulin, surnamed Nini Moulin, standing on the front cushions, would have presented a magnificent study for Callot or Gavarni, that eminent artist who unites with the biting strength and marvelous fancy of an illustrious caricaturist the grace, the poetry, and the depth of Hogarth.

Nini Moulin, who was about thirty-five years of age, wore very much back upon his head a Roman helmet of silver paper. A voluminous plume of black feathers, rising from a red wood holder, was stuck on one side of this head-gear, breaking the too-classic regularity of its outline. Beneath this casque shone forth the most rubicund and jovial face that ever was purpled by the fumes of generous wine. A prominent nose with its primitive shape modestly concealed beneath a luxuriant growth of pimples, half red, half violet, gave a funny expression to a perfectly beardless face ; while a large mouth with thick lips turning their insides outward added to the air of mirth and jollity which beamed from his large gray eyes, set flat in his head.

On seeing this joyous fellow, with a paunch like Silenus, one could not help asking how it was that he had not drowned in wine a hundred times over the gall, bile, and venom which flowed from his pamphlets against the enemies of Ultramontanism, and how his Catholic beliefs could float upward in the midst of these mad excesses of drink and dancing. The question would have appeared insoluble, if one had not remembered how many actors, who play the blackest and most

hateful first robbers on the stage, are, when off it, the best fellows in the world.

The weather being cold, Nini Moulin wore a kind of box-coat, which, being half open, displayed his cuirass of scales, and his flesh-colored pantaloons, finishing just below the calf in a pair of yellow tops to his boots. Leaning forward in front of the carriage, he uttered wild shouts of delight, mingled with the words, "Long live the Bacchanal Queen!" after which he shook and whirled the enormous rattle he held in his hand. Standing beside him, Sleepinbuff waved on high a banner of white silk, on which were the words:

"Love and joy to the Bacchanal Queen!"

Sleepinbuff was about twenty-five years of age. His countenance was gay and intelligent, surrounded by a collar of chestnut-colored whiskers; but, worn with late hours and excesses, it expressed a singular mixture of carelessness and hardihood, recklessness and mockery; still, no base or wicked passion had yet stamped there its fatal impress. He was the perfect type of the *Parisian*, as the term is generally applied, whether in the army, in the provinces, on board a man-of-war or a merchantman. It is not a compliment, and yet it is far from being an insult; it is an epithet which partakes at once of blame, admiration, and fear; for if, in this sense, the *Parisian* is often idle and rebellious, he is also quick at his work, resolute in danger, and always terribly satirical and fond of practical jokes.

He was dressed in very flashy style. He wore a black velvet jacket with silver buttons, a scarlet waistcoat, trousers with broad blue stripes, a Cashmere shawl for a girdle with ends loosely floating, and a chimney-pot hat covered with flowers and streamers. This disguise set off his light, easy figure to great advantage.

At the back of the carriage, standing up on the cushions, were Rose-Pompon and the Bacchanal Queen.

Rose-Pompon, formerly a fringe-maker, was about seventeen years old, and had the prettiest and most winning little face imaginable. She was gayly dressed in *débardeur* costume. Her powdered wig, over which was smartly cocked on one side an orange and green cap, laced with silver, increased the effect of her bright black eyes and of her round carnation cheeks. She wore about her neck an orange-colored cravat of the same material as her loose sash. Her tight jacket and narrow vest of light-green velvet, with silver ornaments, displayed to the best advantage a charming figure, the pliancy of which must have well suited the evolutions of the Full-blown Tulip. Her large trousers, of the same stuff and color as the jacket, were not calculated to hide any of her attractions.

The Bacchanal Queen, being at the least a head taller, leaned with one hand on the shoulder of Rose-Pompon. Mother Bunch's sister ruled, like a true monarch, over this mad revelry, which her very presence seemed to inspire, such influence had her own mirth and animation over all that surrounded her.

She was a tall girl of about twenty-years of age, light and graceful, with regular features and a merry, rollicking air. Like her sister, she had magnificent chestnut hair and large blue eyes; but instead of being soft and timid, like those of the young seamstress, the latter shone with indefatigable ardor in the pursuit of pleasure. Such was the energy of her vivacious constitution that, notwithstanding many nights and days passed in one continued revel, her complexion was as pure, her cheeks as rosy, her neck as fresh and fair as if she had that morning issued from some peaceful home. Her costume, though singular and fantastic, suited her admirably. It was composed of a tight, long-waisted bodice in cloth of gold, trimmed with great bunches of scarlet ribbon, the ends of which streamed over her naked arms, and a short petticoat of scarlet velvet, ornamented with golden beads and spangles. The petticoat reached half-way down a leg at once trim and strong, in a white silk stocking, and red buskin with brass heel.

Never had any Spanish dancer a more supple, elastic, and tempting form than this singular girl, who seemed possessed with the spirit of dancing and perpetual motion, for, almost every moment, a slight undulation of head, hips, and shoulders seemed to follow the music of an invisible orchestra; while the tip of her right foot, placed on the carriage door in the most alluring manner, continued to beat time—for the Bacchanal Queen stood proudly erect upon the cushions.

A sort of gilt diadem, the emblem of her noisy sovereignty, hung with little bells, adorned her forehead. Her long hair, in two thick braids, was drawn back from her rosy cheeks, and twisted behind her head. Her left hand rested on little Rose-Pompon's shoulder, and in her right she held an enormous nosegay, which she waved to the crowd, accompanying each salute with bursts of laughter.

It would be difficult to give a complete idea of this noisily animated and fantastic scene, which included also a third carriage, filled, like the first, with a pyramid of grotesque and extravagant masks. Amongst the delighted crowd one person alone contemplated the picture with deep sorrow. It was Mother Bunch, who was still kept, in spite of herself, in the first rank of spectators.

Separated from her sister for a long time, she now beheld her in all the pomp of her singular triumph, in the midst of the cries of joy and the applause of her companions in pleasure. Yet the eyes of the young

seamstress grew dim with tears; for, though the Bacchanal Queen seemed to share in the stunning gayety of all around her,—though her face was radiant with smiles, and she appeared fully to enjoy the splen-



dors of her temporary elevation,—yet she had the sincere pity of the poor work-woman, almost in rags, who was seeking, with the first dawn of morning, the means of earning her daily bread.

Mother Bunch had forgotten the crowd to look only at her sister, whom she tenderly loved—only the more tenderly that she thought her situation to be pitied. With her eyes fixed on the joyous and beautiful girl, her pale and gentle countenance expressed the most touching and painful interest.

All at once, as the brilliant glance of the Bacchanal Queen traveled along the crowd, it lighted on the sad features of Mother Bunch.

“My sister!” exclaimed Cephyse,—such was the name of the Bacchanal Queen,—“my sister!” And with one bound, light as a ballet-dancer, she sprang from her movable throne (which, fortunately, just happened to be stopping), and, rushing up to the hunchback, embraced her affectionately

All this had passed so rapidly that the companions of the Bacchanal Queen, still stupefied by the boldness of her perilous leap, knew not how to account for it; while the masks who surrounded Mother Bunch drew back in surprise, and the latter, absorbed in the delight of embracing her sister, whose caresses she returned, did not even think of the singular contrast between them, which was sure to soon excite the astonishment and hilarity of the crowd.

Cephyse was the first to think of this, and wishing to save her sister at least one humiliation, she turned toward the carriage, and said:

“Rose-Pompon, throw me down my cloak; and, Nini Moulin, open the door directly”

Having received the cloak, the Bacchanal Queen hastily wrapped it round her sister, before the latter could speak or move. Then, taking her by the hand, she said to her:

“Come! come!”

“I!” cried Mother Bunch, in alarm. “Do not think of it!”

“I must speak with you. I will get a private room, where we shall be alone. So make haste, dear little sister! Do not resist before all these people—but come!”

The fear of becoming a public sight decided Mother Bunch, who, confused, moreover, with the adventure, trembling and frightened, followed her sister almost mechanically, and was dragged by her into the carriage, of which Nini Moulin had just opened the door. And so, with the cloak of the Bacchanal Queen covering Mother Bunch’s poor garments and deformed figure, the crowd had nothing to laugh at, and only wondered what this meeting could mean, while the coaches pursued their way to the eating-house in the Place du Châtelet.

CHAPTER II

THE CONTRAST



OME minutes after the meeting of Mother Bunch with the Bacchanal Queen, the two sisters were alone together in a small room in the tavern.

"Let me kiss you again," said Cephyse to the young seamstress; "at least now we are alone, you will not be afraid?"

In the effort of the Bacchanal Queen to clasp Mother Bunch in her arms, the cloak fell from the form of the latter. At sight of those miserable garments, which she had hardly had time to observe on the Place du Châtelet, in the midst of the crowd, Cephyse clasped her hands, and could not repress an exclamation of painful surprise. Then, approaching her sister, that she might contemplate her more closely, she took her thin, icy palms between her own plump hands and examined for some minutes, with increasing grief, the suffering, pale, unhappy creature, ground down by watching and privations, and half clothed in a poor, patched cotton gown.

"Oh, sister! to see you thus!"

Unable to articulate another word, the Bacchanal Queen threw herself on the other's neck and burst into tears. Then, in the midst of her sobs, she added:

"Pardon! pardon!"

"What is the matter, my dear Cephyse?" said the young sewing-girl, deeply moved, and gently disengaging herself from the embrace of her sister. "Why do you ask my pardon?"

"Why?" resumed Cephyse, raising her countenance, bathed in tears, and purple with shame; "is it not shameful of me, to be dressed in all this frippery, and throwing away so much money in follies, while you are thus miserably clad, and in need of everything—perhaps dying of want, for I have never seen your poor face look so pale and worn."

"Be at ease, dear sister! I am not ill. I was up rather late last night, and that makes me a little pale: but pray do not cry — it grieves me."

The Bacchanal Queen had but just arrived, radiant in the midst of the intoxicated crowd, and yet it was Mother Bunch who was now employed in consoling her!

An incident occurred which made the contrast still more striking. Joyous cries were heard suddenly in the next apartment, and these words were repeated with enthusiasm:

"Long live the Bacchanal Queen!"

Mother Bunch trembled, and her eyes filled with tears, as she saw her sister with her face buried in her hands, as if overwhelmed with shame.

"Cephyse," she said, "I entreat you not to grieve so. You will make me regret the delight of this meeting, which is indeed happiness to me! It is so long since I saw you! But tell me — what ails you?"

"You despise me perhaps—you are right," said the Bacchanal Queen, drying her tears.

"Despise you? for what?"

"Because I lead the life I do, instead of having the courage to support misery along with you."

The grief of Cephyse was so heart-breaking that Mother Bunch, always good and indulgent, wishing to console her and raise her a little in her own estimation, said to her tenderly:

"In supporting it bravely for a whole year, my good Cephyse, you have had more merit and courage than I should have in bearing with it my whole life."

"Oh, sister! do not say that."

"In simple truth," returned Mother Bunch, "to what temptations is a creature like me exposed? Do I not naturally seek solitude, even as you seek a noisy life of pleasure? What wants have I? A very little suffices."

"But you have not always that little?"

"No; but, weak and sickly as I seem, I can endure some privations better than you could. Thus hunger produces in me a sort of numbness, which leaves me very feeble—but for you, robust and full of life, hunger is fury, is madness. Alas! you must remember how many times I have seen you suffering from those painful attacks, when work failed us in our wretched garret, and we could not even earn our four francs a week—so that we had nothing—absolutely nothing to eat; for our pride prevented us from applying to the neighbors."

"You have preserved the right to that honest pride."

"And you as well! Did you not struggle as much as a human creature could? But strength fails at last. I know you well, Cephyse—it was hunger that conquered you, and the painful necessity of constant labor, which was yet insufficient to supply our common wants."

"But you could endure those privations; you endure them still."

"Can you compare me with yourself? Look," said Mother Bunch, taking her sister by the hand, and leading her to a mirror placed above a couch, "look — do you think that God made you so beautiful, endowed you with such quick and ardent blood, with such a joyous, animated, effusive nature, and with such taste and fondness for pleasure, that your youth might be spent in a freezing garret, hid from the sun, nailed constantly to your chair, clad almost in rags, and working without rest and without hope? No! for he has given us other wants than those of eating and drinking. Even in our humble condition, does not beauty require some little ornament? Does not youth require some movement, pleasure, gayety? Do not all ages call for relaxation and rest? Had you gained sufficient wages to satisfy hunger, to have a day or so's amusement in the week, after working every other day for twelve or fifteen hours, and to procure the neat and modest dress which so charming a face might naturally claim — you would never have asked for more; I am sure of it; you have told me as much a hundred times. You have yielded, therefore, to an irresistible necessity, because your wants are greater than mine."

"It is true," replied the Bacchanal Queen, with a pensive air; "if I could but have gained eighteenpence a day, my life would have been quite different; for, in the beginning, sister, I felt cruelly humiliated to live at the expense of anybody"

"Yes, yes; it was inevitable, my dear Cephyse. I must pity, but cannot blame you. You did not choose your destiny; but, like me, you have submitted to it."

"Poor sister!" said Cephyse, embracing the speaker tenderly; "you can encourage and console me in the midst of your own misfortunes, when I ought to be pitying you."

"Be satisfied!" said Mother Bunch; "God is just and good. If he has denied me many advantages, he has given me my joys, as you have yours."

"Joys?"

"Yes, and great ones — without which life would be too burdensome, and I should not have the courage to go through with it."

"I understand you," said Cephyse, with emotion; "you still know how to devote yourself for others, and that lightens your own sorrows."

"I do what I can; but, alas! it is very little. Yet, when I succeed," added Mother Bunch, with a faint smile, "I am as proud and happy as a poor little ant who, after a great deal of trouble, has brought a big straw to the common nest. But do not let us talk any more of me."

"Yes, but I must, even at the risk of making you angry," resumed the Bacchanal Queen timidly; "I have something to propose to you which you once before refused. Jacques Rennepont has still, I think, some money left. We are spending it in follies, now and then giving a little to poor people we may happen to meet. I beg of you let me come to your assistance; I see in your poor face—you cannot conceal it from me—that you are wearing yourself out with toil."

"Thanks, my dear Cephyse, I know your good heart; but I am not in want of anything. The little I gain is sufficient for me."

"You refuse me," said the Bacchanal Queen sadly, "because you know that my claim to the money is not honorable; be it so. I respect your scruples. But you will not refuse a service from Jacques; he has been a workman like ourselves, and comrades should help each other. Accept it, I beseech you, or I shall think you despise me."

"And I shall think you despise me if you insist any more upon it, my dear Cephyse," said Mother Bunch, in a tone at once so mild and firm that the Bacchanal Queen saw that all persuasion would be in vain.

She hung her head sorrowfully, and a tear again trickled down her cheek.

"My refusal grieves you," said the other, taking her hand. "I am truly sorry; but reflect, and you will understand me."

"You are right," said the Bacchanal Queen bitterly, after a moment's silence; "you cannot accept assistance from my lover; it was an insult to propose it to you. There are positions in life so humiliating that they soil even the good one wishes to do."

"Cephyse, I did not mean to hurt you—you know it well."

"Oh! believe me," replied the Bacchanal Queen, "gay and giddy as I am, I have sometimes moments of reflection, even in the midst of my maddest joy. Happily, such moments are rare."

"And what do you think of then?"

"Why, that the life I lead is hardly the thing. Then I resolve to ask Jacques for a small sum of money—just enough to subsist on for a year—and form the plan of joining you and gradually getting to work again."

"The idea is a good one; why not act upon it?"

"Because, when about to execute this project, I examined myself sincerely, and my courage failed. I feel that I could never resume the habit of labor, and renounce this mode of life, sometimes rich, as to-day, sometimes precarious—but at least free and full of leisure, joyous and without care, and at worst a thousand times preferable to living upon four francs a week. But it is not interest that has guided me. Many times have I refused to exchange a lover who had little or nothing for

a rich man that I did not like. Nor have I ever asked anything for myself. Jacques has spent perhaps ten thousand francs the last three or four months, yet we only occupy two half-furnished rooms, because we always live out-of-doors, like the birds. Fortunately, when I first loved him, he had nothing at all, and I had just sold some jewels that had been given me, for a hundred francs, and put this sum in the lottery. As mad people and fools are always lucky, I gained a prize of four thousand francs. Jacques was as gay and light-headed and full of fun as myself, so we said: 'We love each other very much, and as long as this money lasts we will keep up the racket; when we have no more, one of two things will happen—either we shall be tired of each other, and so part, or else we shall love each other still, and then, to remain together, we shall try and get work again; and, if we cannot do so, and yet will not part—a bushel of charcoal will do our business!'"

"Good Heaven!" cried Mother Bunch, turning pale.

"Be satisfied! we have not come to that. We had still something left, when a kind of agent, who had paid court to me, but who was so ugly that I could not bear him for all his riches, knowing that I was living with Jacques, asked me to — But why should I trouble you with all these details? In one word, he lent Jacques money, on some sort of a doubtful claim he had, as was thought, to inherit some property. It is with this money that we are amusing ourselves — as long as it lasts."

"But, my dear Cephyse, instead of spending this money so foolishly, why not put it out to interest and marry Jacques, since you love him?"

"Oh! in the first place," replied the Bacchanal Queen, laughing, as her gay and thoughtless character resumed its ascendancy, "to put money out to interest gives one no pleasure. All the amusement one has is to look at a little bit of paper which one gets in exchange for the nice little pieces of gold, with which one can purchase a thousand pleasures. As for marrying, I certainly like Jacques better than I ever liked any one; but it seems to me, that, if we were married, all our happiness would end; for while he is only my lover, he cannot reproach me with what has passed — but, as my husband, he would be sure to upbraid me, sooner or later, and, if my conduct deserves blame, I prefer giving it to myself, because I shall do it more tenderly."

"Mad girl that you are! But this money will not last forever. What is to be done next?"

"Afterward! — Oh! that's all in the moon. To-morrow seems to me as if it would not come for a hundred years. If we were always

saying, 'We must die one day or the other,' would life be worth having?"

The conversation between Cephyse and her sister was here again interrupted by a terrible uproar, above which sounded the sharp, shrill noise of Nini Moulin's rattle. To this tumult succeeded a chorus of barbarous cries, in the midst of which were distinguishable these words, which shook the very windows:

"The Queen! the Bacchanal Queen!"

Mother Bunch started at this sudden noise.

"It is only my court, who are getting impatient," said Cephyse; and this time she could laugh.

"Heavens!" cried the sewing-girl, in alarm; "if they were to come here in search of you?"

"No, no — never fear"

"But listen! do you not hear those steps? they are coming along the passage — they are approaching. Pray, sister, let me go out alone, without being seen by all these people."

That moment the door was opened, and Cephyse ran toward it. She saw in the passage a deputation headed by Nini Moulin, who was armed with his formidable rattle, and followed by Rose-Pompon and Sleepinbuff.

"The Bacchanal Queen! or I poison myself with a glass of water!" cried Nini Moulin.

"The Bacchanal Queen! or I publish my banns of marriage with Nini Moulin!" cried little Rose-Pompon, with a determined air.

"The Bacchanal Queen! or the court will rise in arms and carry her off by force!" said another voice.

"Yes, yes — let us carry her off!" repeated a formidable chorus.

"Jacques, enter alone!" said the Bacchanal Queen, notwithstanding these pressing summonses; then, addressing her court in a majestic tone, she added:

"In ten minutes I shall be at your service — and then for a high old time!"

"Long live the Bacchanal Queen!" cried Dumoulin, shaking his rattle as he retired, followed by the deputation, while Sleepinbuff entered the room alone.

"Jacques," said Cephyse, "this is my good sister"

"Enchanted to see you," said Jacques cordially; "the more so as you will give me some news of my friend Agricola. Since I began to play the rich man, we have not seen each other, but I like him as much as ever, and think him a good and worthy fellow. You live in the same house. How is he?"

"Alas, sir! he and his family have had many misfortunes. He is in prison."

"In prison!" cried Cephyse.



"Agricola in prison! what for?" said Sleepinbuff.

"For a trifling political offense. We had hoped to get him out on bail."

"Certainly; for five hundred francs it could be done," said Sleepinbuff.

"Unfortunately, we have not been able; the person upon whom we relied ——"

The Bacchanal Queen interrupted the speaker by saying to her lover:

"Do you hear, Jacques? Agricola in prison, for want of five hundred francs!"

"To be sure! I hear and understand all about it. No need of your winking. Poor fellow! he was the support of his mother."

"Alas! yes, sir — and it is the more distressing, as his father has but just returned from Russia, and his mother ——"

"Here," said Sleepinbuff, interrupting, and giving Mother Bunch a purse; "take this. All the expenses here have been paid beforehand; this is what remains of my last bag. You will find here some twenty-five or thirty Napoleons, and I cannot make a better use of them than to serve a comrade in distress. Give them to Agricola's father; he will take the necessary steps, and to-morrow Agricola will be at his forge, where I had much rather he should be than myself."

"Jacques, give me a kiss!" said the Bacchanal Queen.

"Now, and afterward, and again and again!" said Jacques, joyously embracing the queen.

Mother Bunch hesitated for a moment; but reflecting that, after all, this sum of money, which was about to be spent in follies, would restore life and happiness to the family of Agricola, and that hereafter these very five hundred francs, when returned to Jacques, might be of the greatest use to him, she resolved to accept this offer. She took the purse and, with tearful eyes, said to him:

"I will not refuse your kindness, M. Jacques; you are so good and generous. Agricola's father will thus at least have one consolation, in the midst of heavy sorrows. Thanks! many thanks!"

"There is no need to thank me; money was made for others as well as ourselves."

Here, without, the noise recommenced more furiously than ever, and Nini Moulin's rattle sent forth the most doleful sounds.

"Cephyse," said Sleepinbuff, "they will break everything to pieces if you do not return to them, and I have nothing left to pay for the damage. Excuse us," added he, laughing, "but you see that royalty has its duties."

Cephyse, deeply moved, extended her arms to Mother Bunch, who threw herself into them, shedding sweet tears.

"And now," said she to her sister, "when shall I see you again?"

"Soon — though nothing grieves me more than to see you in want, out of which I am not allowed to help you."

"You will come, then, to see me? It is a promise?"

"I promise you in her name," said Jacques; "we will pay a visit to you and your neighbor Agricola."

"Return to the company, Cephyse, and amuse yourself with a light heart, for M. Jacques has made a whole family happy."

So saying, and after Sleepinbuff had ascertained that she could go down without being seen by his noisy and joyous companions, Mother Bunch quietly withdrew, eager to carry one piece of good news at least to Dagobert; but intending, first of all, to go to the Rue de Babylone, to the garden-house formerly occupied by Adrienne de Cardoville. We shall explain hereafter the cause of this determination.

As the girl quitted the eating-house, three men, plainly and comfortably dressed, were watching before it, and talking in a low voice. Soon after, they were joined by a fourth person, who rapidly descended the stairs of the tavern.

"Well?" said the three first, with anxiety.

"He is there."

"Are you sure of it?"

"Are there two Sleepers-in-buff on earth?" replied the other. "I have just seen him; he is togged out like a regular dude. They will be at table for three hours at least."

"Then wait for me. Keep as quiet as possible. I will go and fetch the *captain*, and the game is bagged."

So saying, one of the three men walked off quickly, and disappeared in a street leading from the square.

At this same instant the Bacchanal Queen entered the banqueting-room, accompanied by Jacques, and was received with the most frenzied acclamations from all sides.

"Now, then," cried Cephyse, with a sort of feverish excitement, as if she wished to stun herself; "now, then, friends—noise and tumult, hurricane and tempest, thunder and earthquake—as much as you please!"

Then, holding out her glass to Nini Moulin, she added:

"Fill up! fill up!"

"Long live the Queen!" cried they all, with one voice. "Long live the Bacchanal Queen!"

CHAPTER III

THE CAROUSE

THE Bacchanal Queen, having Sleepinbuff and Rose-Pompon opposite her, and Nini Moulin on her right hand, presided at the repast, called *réveille-matin* (wake-morning), generally offered by Jacques to his companions in pleasure.

Both young men and girls seemed to have forgotten the fatigues of a ball begun at eleven o'clock in the evening and finished at six in the morning; and all these couples, joyous as they were amorous and indefatigable, laughed, ate, and drank with youthful and Pantagruelian ardor, so that, during the first part of the feast, there was less chatter than clatter of plates and glasses.

The Bacchanal Queen's countenance was less gay, but much more animated than usual; her flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes announced a feverish excitement; she wished to drown reflection, cost what it might. Her conversation with her sister often recurred to her, and she tried to escape from such sad remembrances.

Jacques regarded Cephyse from time to time with passionate adoration; for, thanks to the singular conformity of character, mind, and taste between him and the Bacchanal Queen, their attachment had deeper and stronger roots than generally belong to ephemeral connections founded upon pleasure. Cephyse and Jacques were themselves not aware of all the power of a passion which till now had been surrounded only by joys and festivities, and not yet been tried by any untoward event.

Little Rose-Pompon, left a widow a few days before by a student, who in order to end the carnival in style had gone into the country to raise supplies from his family, under one of those fabulous pretenses which tradition carefully preserves in colleges of law and medicine — Rose-Pompon, we repeat, an example of rare fidelity, determined not to compromise herself, had taken for a chaperon the inoffensive Nini Moulin.

This latter, having doffed his helmet, exhibited a bald head, encircled by a border of black, curling hair, pretty long at the back of the head. By a remarkable Bacchic phenomenon, in proportion as intoxication gained upon him, a sort of zone, as purple as his jovial face, crept by degrees over his brow till it overcame even the shining whiteness of his crown. Rose-Pompon, who knew the meaning of this symptom, pointed it out to the company and exclaimed with a loud burst of laughter:

“Take care, Nini Moulin! the tide of the wine is coming in.”

“When it rises above his head he will be drowned,” added the Bacchanal Queen.

“Oh, Queen! don’t disturb me; I am meditating,” answered Dumoulin, who was getting tipsy. He held in his hand, in the fashion of an antique goblet, a punch-bowl filled with wine, for he despised the ordinary glasses because of their small size.

“Meditating,” echoed Rose-Pompon, “Nini Moulin is meditating. Be attentive!”

“He is meditating; he must be ill then!”

“What is he meditating? an illegal dance?”

“A forbidden Anacreontic attitude?”

“Yes, I am meditating,” returned Dumoulin gravely; “I am meditating upon wine generally and in particular—wine of which the immortal Bossuet,”—Dumoulin had the very bad habit of quoting Bossuet when he was drunk,—“of which the immortal Bossuet says (and he was a judge of good liquor), ‘In wine is courage, strength, joy, and spiritual fervor’—when one has any brains,” added Nini Moulin by way of parenthesis.

“Oh, my! how I adore your Bossuet!” said Rose-Pompon.

“As for my particular meditation, it concerns the question whether the wine at the marriage of Cana was red or white? Sometimes I incline to one side, sometimes to the other—and sometimes to both at once.”

“That is going to the bottom of the question,” said Sleepinbuff.

“And, above all, to the bottom of the bottles,” added the Bacchanal Queen.

“As your majesty is pleased to observe; and already, by dint of reflection and research, I have made a great discovery,—namely, that if the wine at the marriage of Cana was red ——”

“It couldn’t have been white!” said Rose-Pompon judiciously

“And if I had arrived at the conviction that it was neither white nor red?” asked Dumoulin, with a magisterial air.

“That could only be when you had drunk till all was *blue*,” observed Sleepinbuff.

"The spouse of the Queen says well. One may be too athirst for science; but never mind! From all my studies on this question to which I have devoted my life, I shall await the end of my respectable career with the sense of having given my thirst a historical, theological, and archæological color."

It is impossible to describe the jovial grimace and tone with which Dumoulin pronounced and accentuated these last words, which provoked a general laugh.

"*Archicological?*" said Rose-Pompon. "What is that? Has it a tail? Does he live in the water?"

"Never mind," observed the Bacchanal Queen; "these are words of wise men and conjurers; they are like horse-hair bustles: they serve for filling out, that's all. I like better to drink, so fill the glasses, Nini Moulin. Some champagne, Rose-Pompon; here's to the health of your Philemon and his speedy return."

"And to the success of his plant upon his stupid and stingy family!" added Rose-Pompon.

The toast was received with unanimous applause.

"With the permission of her majesty and her court," said Dumoulin, "I propose a toast to the success of a project which greatly interests me, and has some resemblance to Philemon's racket. I fancy that the toast will bring me luck."

"Let's have it, by all means!"

"Well, then,—success to my marriage!" said Dumoulin, rising.

These words provoked an explosion of shouts, applause, and laughter. Nini Moulin shouted, applauded, laughed even louder than the rest, opening wide his enormous mouth, and adding to the stunning noise the harsh springing of his rattle, which he had taken up from under his chair.

When the storm had somewhat subsided, the Bacchanal Queen rose and said:

"I drink to the health of the future Madame Nini Moulin!"

"Oh, Queen! your courtesy touches me so sensibly that I must allow you to read in the depths of my heart the name of my future spouse," exclaimed Dumoulin. "She is called Madame Honorée-Modeste-Messaline-Angèle de la Sainte-Colombe, widow."

"Bravo! bravo!"

"She is sixty years old, and has more thousands of francs a year than she has hairs in her gray mustache or wrinkles on her face; she is so superbly fat that one of her gowns would serve as a tent for this honorable company. I hope to present my future spouse to you on Shrove Tuesday, in the costume of a shepherdess who has just devoured her

flock. Some of them wish to *convert* her, but I have undertaken to *divert* her,—which she will like better. You must help me plunge her headlong into all sorts of Bacchic jollity”

“We will plunge her into anything you please.”

“She shall dance the cancan when her looks are white!” said Rose-Pompon, humming a popular tune.

“She will overawe the police.”

“We can say to them, ‘Respect this lady; your mother will perhaps be as old some day!’”

Suddenly the Bacchanal Queen rose; her countenance wore a singular expression of bitter and sardonic delight. In one hand she held a glass full to the brim.

“I hear the Cholera is approaching in his seven-league boots,” she cried. “I drink luck to the Cholera!”

And she emptied the bumper.

Notwithstanding the general gayety, these words made a gloomy impression; a sort of electric shudder ran through the assemblage, and nearly every countenance became suddenly serious.

“Oh, Cephyse!” said Jacques, in a tone of reproach.

“Here is to the Cholera,” repeated the Queen fearlessly “Let him spare those who wish to live, and kill together those who dread to part!”

Jacques and Cephyse exchanged a rapid glance, unnoticed by their joyous companions, and for some time the Bacchanal Queen remained silent and thoughtful.

“If you put it that way, it is different,” cried Rose-Pompon boldly. “To the Cholera! may none but good fellows be left on earth!”

In spite of this variation, the impression was still painfully impressive. Dumoulin, wishing to cut short this gloomy subject, exclaimed:

“Devil take the dead, and long live the living! And, talking of chaps who both live and live well, I ask you to drink a health most dear to our joyous queen, the health of our Amphytrion. Unfortunately, I do not know his respectable name, having only had the advantage of making his acquaintance this night; he will excuse me, then, if I confine myself to proposing the health of Sleepinbuff — a name by no means offensive to my modesty, as Adam never slept in any other manner. I drink to Sleepinbuff.”

“Thanks, old man!” said Jacques gayly; “were I to forget your name, I should call you ‘Have-a-sip?’ and I am sure that you would answer, ‘I will!’”

“I will directly!” said Dumoulin, making the military salute with one hand and holding out the bowl with the other

"As we have drunk together," resumed Sleepinbuff cordially, "we ought to know each other thoroughly I am Jacques Rennepont."

"Rennepont!" cried Dumoulin, who appeared struck by the name, in spite of his half drunkenness; "you are Rennepont?"

"Rennepont in the fullest sense of the word. Does that astonish you?"

"There is a very ancient family of that name—the Counts of Rennepont."

"The deuce there is!" said the other, laughing.

"The Counts of Rennepont are also Dukes of Cardoville," added Dumoulin.

"Now, come, old fellow! do I look as if I belonged to such a family?—I, a workman out for a spree?"

"You a workman? why, we are getting into the Arabian Nights!" cried Dumoulin, more and more surprised. "You give us a Belshazzar's banquet, with accompaniment of carriages-and-four, and yet are a workman? Only tell me your trade, and I will join you, leaving the vineyard of the Lord to take care of itself."

"Come, I say! don't think that I am a printer of flimsies and a coiner!" replied Jacques, laughing.

"Oh, comrade! no such suspicion——"

"It would be excusable, seeing the rigs I run. But I'll make you easy on that point. I am spending an inheritance."

"Eating and drinking an uncle, no doubt?" said Dumoulin benevolently

"Faith, I don't know."

"What! you don't know whom you are eating and drinking?"

"Why, you see, in the first place, my father was a rag-picker."

"The devil he was!" said Dumoulin, somewhat out of countenance, though in general not over-scrupulous in the choice of his bottle-companions; but after the first surprise, he resumed, with the most charming amenity:

"There are some rag-pickers very distinguished!"

"To be sure! you may think to laugh at me," said Jacques, "but you are right in this respect, for my father was a man of very great merit. He spoke Greek and Latin like a scholar, and often told me that he had not his equal in mathematics; besides, he had traveled a good deal."

"Well, then," resumed Dumoulin, whom surprise had partly sobered, "you may belong to the family of the Counts of Rennepont, after all."

"In which case," said Rose-Pompon, laughing, "your father was not a gutter-snipe by trade, but only for the honor of the thing."

“No, no—worse luck! it was to earn his living,” replied Jacques; “but in his youth he had been well off. By what appeared, or rather by what did not appear, he had applied to some rich relation, and the



rich relation had said to him, ‘Much obliged!’ Then he wished to make use of his Greek and Latin and mathematics. Impossible to do anything, Paris, it seems, being choke-full of learned men; so my father had to look for his bread at the end of a hooked stick,—and there, too,

he must have found it, for I ate of it during two years, when I came to live with him after the death of an aunt, with whom I had been staying in the country."

"Your respectable father must have been a sort of philosopher," said Dumoulin; "but, unless he found an inheritance in a dust-bin, I don't see how you came into your property."

"Wait for the end of the song. At twelve years of age I was an apprentice at the factory of M. Tripeaud; two years afterward my father died of an accident, leaving me the furniture of our garret,—a mattress, a chair, and a table,—and, moreover, in an old Eau de Cologne box, some papers (written, it seems, in English), and a bronze medal, worth about ten sous, chain and all. He had never spoken to me of these papers, so, not knowing if they were good for anything, I left them at the bottom of an old trunk, instead of burning them, which was well for me, since it is upon these papers that I have had money advanced."

"What a godsend!" said Dumoulin. "But somebody must have known that you had them?"

"Yes; one of those people that are always looking out for old debts came to Cephyse, who told me all about it; and, after he had read the papers he said that the affair was doubtful, but that he would lend me ten thousand francs on it if I liked. Ten thousand francs was a large sum, so I snapped him up!"

"But you must have supposed that these old papers were of great value?"

"Faith, no! since my father, who ought to have known their value, had never realized on them; and then, you see, ten thousand francs in good, bright coin, falling, as it were, from the clouds, are not to be sneezed at; so I took them, only the man made me do a bit of stiff—a guarantee, or something of that kind."

"Did you sign it?"

"Of course! What did I care about it? The man told me it was only a matter of form. He spoke the truth, for the bill fell due a fortnight ago, and I have heard nothing of it. I have still about a thousand francs in his hands, for I have taken him for my banker. And that's the way, old fellow, that I am able to flourish and be jolly all day long, as pleased as Punch to have left my old grinder of a master, M. Tripeaud."

As he pronounced this name the joyous countenance of Jacques became suddenly overcast. Cephyse, no longer under the influence of the painful impression she had felt for a moment, looked uneasily at Jacques, for she knew the irritation which the name of M. Tripeaud produced within him.

"M. Tripeaud," resumed Sleepinbuff, "is one that would make the good bad and the bad worse. They say that a good rider makes a good horse; they ought to say that a good master makes a good workman. Zounds! when I think of that fellow!" cried Sleepinbuff, striking his hand violently on the table.

"Come, Jacques, think of something else!" said the Bacchanal Queen. "Make him laugh, Rose-Pompon."

"I am not in a humor to laugh," replied Jacques abruptly, for he was getting excited from the effects of the wine; "it is more than I can bear to think of that man. It exasperates me! it drives me mad! You should have heard him saying, 'Beggarly workmen! rascally workmen! they grumble that they have no food in their bellies; well, then, we'll give them bayonets to stop their hunger.'* And there's the children in his factory—you should see them, poor little creatures!—working as long as the men—wasting away and dying by the dozen. What odds? as soon as they were dead plenty of others came to take their places—not like horses, which can only be replaced with money"

"Well, it is clear that you do not like your old master," said Dumoulin, more and more surprised at his Amphitryon's gloomy and thoughtful air, and regretting that the conversation had taken this serious turn, he whispered a few words in the ear of the Bacchanal Queen, who answered by a sign of intelligence.

"I don't like M. Tripeaud!" exclaimed Jacques. "I hate him—and shall I tell you why? Because it is as much his fault as mine that I have become a good-for-nothing loafer. I don't say it to screen myself, but it is the truth. When I was 'prenticed to him as a lad, I was all heart and ardor, and so bent upon work that I used to take my shirt off to my task, which, by the way, was the reason that I was first called Sleepinbuff. Well! I might have toiled myself to death; not one word of encouragement did I receive. I came first to my work, and was the last to leave off; what matter? it was not even noticed. One day I was injured by the machinery I was taken to the hospital. When I came out, weak as I was, I went straight to my work; I was not to be frightened. The others, who knew their master well, would often say to me: 'What a muff you must be, little one! What good will you get by working so hard?' Still I went on. But one day a worthy old man, called Father Arsène, who had worked in the house many years and was a model of good conduct, was suddenly turned away because he was getting too feeble. It was a death-blow to him; his wife was infirm, and, at his age, he could not get another place. When the foreman told him he was dismissed he could not believe it, and he began to cry

* These atrocious words were actually spoken during the Lyons Riots.

for grief. At that moment M. Tripeaud passes; Father Arsène begs him with clasped hands to keep him at half wages. 'What!' says M. Tripeaud, shrugging his shoulders; 'do you think that I will turn my factory into a house of invalids? You are no longer able to work, so be off!' 'But I have worked forty years of my life; what is to become of me?' cried poor Father Arsène. 'That is not my business,' answered M. Tripeaud; and, addressing his clerk, he added: 'Pay what is due for the week, and let him cut his stick.' Father Arsène did cut his stick; that evening he and his old wife suffocated themselves with charcoal. Now, you see, I was then a lad; but that story of Father Arsène taught me that, however hard you might work, it would only profit your master, who would not even thank you for it, and leave you to die on the flags in your old age. So all my fire was damped, and I said to myself: 'What's the use of doing more than I just need? If I gain heaps of gold for M. Tripeaud, shall I get an atom of it?' Therefore, finding neither pride nor profit in my work, I took a disgust for it—just did barely enough to earn my wages—became an idler and a rake—and said to myself: 'When I get too tired of labor I can always follow the example of Father Arsène and his wife.'

While Jacques resigned himself to the current of these bitter thoughts, the other guests, incited by the expressive pantomime of Dumoulin and the Bacchanal Queen, had tacitly agreed together; and, on a signal from the Queen, who leaped upon the table and threw down the bottles and glasses with her foot, all rose and shouted, with the accompaniment of Nini Moulin's rattle: "The Full-blown Tulip! the quadrille of the Full-blown Tulip!"

At these joyous cries, which burst suddenly, like a bomb, Jacques started; then gazing with astonishment at his guests, he drew his hand across his brow, as if to chase away the painful ideas that oppressed him, and exclaimed:

"You are right. Forward the first couple! Let us be merry!"

In a moment, the table, lifted by vigorous arms, was removed to the extremity of the banqueting-room; the spectators mounted upon chairs, benches, and window-ledges, began to sing in chorus the well-known air of *les Etudiants*, so as to serve instead of orchestra and accompany the quadrille formed by Sleepinbuff, the Queen, Nini Moulin, and Rose-Pompon.

Dumoulin, having intrusted his rattle to one of the guests, resumed his extravagant Roman helmet and plume; he had taken off his great-coat at the commencement of the feast, so that he now appeared in all the splendor of his costume. His cuirass of bright scales ended in a tunic of feathers, not unlike those worn by the savages who form the

oxen's escort on Mardi Gras. Nini Moulin had a huge paunch and thin legs, so that the latter moved about at pleasure in the gaping mouths of his large top-boots.

Little Rose-Pompon, with her pinched-up cocked-hat stuck on one side, her hands in the pockets of her trousers, her bust a little inclined forward and undulating from right to left, advanced to meet Nini Moulin; the latter danced, or rather leaped, toward her, his left leg bent under him, his right leg stretched forward, with the toe raised and the heel gliding on the floor; moreover, he struck his neck with his left hand, and by a simultaneous movement stretched forth his right, as if he would have thrown dust in the eyes of his opposite partner.

This first figure met with great success, and the applause was vociferous, though it was only the innocent prelude to the step of the Full-blown Tulip — when suddenly the door opened, and one of the waiters, after looking about for an instant, in search of Sleepinbuff, ran to him, and whispered some words in his ear.

"Me!" cried Jacques, laughing; "here's a go!"

The waiter added a few more words, when Sleepinbuff's face assumed an expression of uneasiness, as he answered:

"Very well! I come directly." And he made a step toward the door

"What's the matter, Jacques?" asked the Bacchanal Queen, in some surprise.

"I'll be back immediately. Some one take my place. Go on with the dance," said Sleepinbuff, as he hastily left the room.

"Something that was not put down in the bill," said Dumoulin; "he will soon be back."

"That's it," said Cephyse. "Now, *cavalier seul!*" she added, as she took Jacques' place; and the dance continued.

Nini Moulin had just taken hold of Rose-Pompon with his right hand, and of the Queen with his left, in order to advance between the two, in which figure he showed off his buffoonery to the utmost extent, when the door again opened, and the same waiter who had called out Jacques approached Cephyse with an air of consternation and whispered in her ear, as he had before done to Sleepinbuff.

The Bacchanal Queen grew pale, uttered a piercing scream, and rushed out of the room without a word, leaving her guests in stupefaction.

CHAPTER IV

THE FAREWELL

THE Bacchanal Queen, following the waiter, arrived at the bottom of the staircase. A coach was standing before the door of the house. In it she saw Sleepinbuff with one of the men who, two hours before, had been waiting on the Place du Châtelet.

On the arrival of Cephyse, the man got down, and said to Jacques, as he drew out his watch :

“ I give you a quarter of an hour ; it is all that I can do for you, my good fellow. After that we must start. Do not try to escape, for we'll be watching at the coach-doors.”

With one spring Cephyse was in the coach. Too much overcome to speak before, she now exclaimed, as she took her seat by Jacques and remarked the paleness of his countenance :

“ What is it ? What do they want with you ? ”

“ I am arrested for debt,” said Jacques, in a mournful voice.

“ You ! ” exclaimed Cephyse, with a heart-rending sob.

“ Yes, for that bill or guarantee they made me sign. And yet the man said it was only a form — the rascal ! ”

“ But you have money in his hands ; let him take that on account.”

“ I have not a copper ; he sends me word by the bailiff that, not having paid the bill, I shall not have the last thousand francs.”

“ Then let us go to him and entreat him to leave you at liberty. It was he who came to propose to lend you this money I know it well, as he first addressed himself to me. He will have pity on you.”

“ Pity ? A money-broker pity ? No ! no ! ”

“ Is there then no hope ? None ? ” cried Cephyse, clasping her hands in anguish.

“ But there must be something done,” she resumed. “ He promised you —— ”

“ You can see how he keeps his promises,” answered Jacques, with bitterness. “ I signed without even knowing what I signed. The bill is

overdue; everything is in order; it would be in vain to resist. They have just explained all that to me."

"But they cannot keep you long in prison. It is impossible."

"Five years, if I do not pay. As I'll never be able to do so, my fate is certain."

"Oh! what a misfortune! and not to be able to do anything!" said Cephyse, hiding her face in her hands.

"Listen to me, Cephyse," resumed Jacques, in a voice of mournful emotion; "since I am here I have thought only of one thing: what is to become of you?"

"Never mind me!"

"Not mind you?—art mad? What will you do? The furniture of our two rooms is not worth two hundred francs. We have squandered our money so foolishly that we have not even paid our rent. We owe three quarters, and we must not therefore count upon the furniture. I leave you without a coin. At least *I* shall be fed in prison—but how will you manage to live?"

"What is the use of grieving beforehand?"

"I ask you how you will live to-morrow?" cried Jacques.

"I will sell my costume and some other clothes. I will send you half the money and keep the rest. That will last some days."

"And afterward?—afterward?"

"Afterward? Why, then—I don't know; how can I tell you? Afterward I'll look about me."

"Hear me, Cephyse," resumed Jacques, with bitter agony; "it is now that I first know how much I love you. My heart is pressed as in a vise at the thought of leaving you, and I shudder to think what is to become of you."

Then, drawing his hand across his forehead, Jacques added:

"You see we have been ruined by saying, 'To-morrow will never come!' for to-morrow *has* come. When I am no longer with you, and you have spent the last penny of the money gained by the sale of your clothes—unfit for work as you have become—what will you do next? Must I tell you what you will do? You will forget me and ——"

Then, as if he recoiled from his own thoughts, Jacques exclaimed, with a burst of rage and despair:

"Great Heaven! if that were to happen, I should dash my brains out against the stones!"

Cephyse guessed the half-told meaning of Jacques, and throwing her arms around his neck, she said to him:

"I take another lover? never! I am like you, for I now first know how much I love you."

"But, my poor Cephyse, how will you live?"

"Well, I shall take courage. I will go back and dwell with my sister, as in old times; we will work together, and so earn our bread. I'll never go out, except to visit you. In a few days your creditor will reflect that, as you can't pay him ten thousand francs, he may as well set you free. By that time I shall have once more acquired the habit of working. You shall see, you shall see! And you also will again acquire this habit. We shall live poor, but content. After all, we have had plenty of amusement for six months, while so many others have never known pleasure all their lives. And believe me, my dear Jacques, when I say to you, I shall profit by this lesson. If you love me, do not feel the least uneasiness; I tell you that I would rather die a hundred times than have another lover."

"Kiss me," said Jacques, with eyes full of tears. "I believe you—yes, I believe you—and you give me back my courage, both for now and hereafter. You are right: we must try and get to work again, or else nothing remains but Father Arsène's bushel of charcoal; for, my girl," added Jacques, in a low and trembling voice, "I have been like a drunken man these six months, and now I am getting sober and see whither we were going. Our means once exhausted, I might perhaps have become a robber, and you —"

"Oh, Jacques! don't talk so; it is frightful," interrupted Cephyse. "I swear to you that I will return to my sister; that I will work; that I will have courage!"

Thus saying, the Bacchanal Queen was very sincere; she fully intended to keep her word, for her heart was not yet completely corrupted. Misery and want had been with her, as with so many others, the cause and the excuse of her worst errors. Until now she had at least followed the instincts of her heart, without regard to any base or venal motive. The cruel position in which she beheld Jacques had so far exalted her love that she believed herself capable of resuming, along with Mother Bunch, that life of sterile and incessant toil, full of painful sacrifices and privations, which once had been impossible for her to bear, and which the habits of a life of leisure and dissipation would now render still more difficult.

Still, the assurances which she had just given Jacques calmed his grief and anxiety a little; he had sense and feeling enough to perceive that the fatal track, which he had hitherto so blindly followed, was leading both him and Cephyse directly to infamy

One of the bailiffs, having knocked at the coach-door, said to Jacques:

"My lad, you have only five minutes left — so make haste."

"So courage, my girl — courage!" said Jacques.

"I will; you may rely upon me"

"Are you going upstairs again?"

"No — oh, no!" said Cephyse. "I have now a horror of this festivity."



"Everything is paid for, and the waiter will tell them not to expect us back. They will be much astonished," continued Jacques, "but it's all the same now."

"If you could only go with me to our lodging," said Cephyse, "this man would perhaps permit it, so as not to enter Sainte-Pélagie in that dress."

"Oh! he will not refuse to accompany me; but, as he will be with us in the coach, we shall not be able to talk freely in his presence. Therefore, let me speak reason to you, for the first time in my life. Remember what I say, my dear Cephyse — and the counsel will apply to me as well as to yourself," continued Jacques, in a grave and feeling tone. "Resume from to-day the habit of labor. It may be painful, unprofitable — never mind; do not hesitate, for too soon will the influence of this lesson be forgotten. By and by it will be too late, and then you will end like so many unfortunate creatures ——"

"I understand," said Cephyse, blushing; "but I will rather die than lead such a life."

"And there you will do well; for in that case," added Jacques, in a deep, hollow voice, "I will myself show you how to die."

"I count upon you, Jacques," answered Cephyse, embracing her lover with excited feeling; then she added sorrowfully: "It was a kind of presentiment, when just now I felt so sad, without knowing why, in the midst of all our gayety — and drank to the Cholera, so that we might die together."

"Well! perhaps the Cholera will come," resumed Jacques, with a gloomy air; "that would save us the charcoal, which we may not even be able to buy"

"I can only tell you one thing, Jacques, that to live and die together, you will always find me ready."

"Come, dry your eyes," said he, with profound emotion. "Do not let us play the children before these men."

Some minutes after, the coach took the direction to Jacques' lodging, where he was to change his clothes, before proceeding to the debtors' prison.

Let us repeat, with regard to the hunchback's sister,— for there are things which cannot be too often repeated,— that one of the most fatal consequences of the inorganization of labor is the insufficiency of wages.

The insufficiency of wages forces inevitably the greater number of young girls, thus badly paid, to seek their means of subsistence in connections which deprave them. Sometimes they receive a small allowance from their lovers, which, joined to the produce of their labor, enables them to live. Sometimes, like the seamstress's sister, they throw aside their work altogether, and take up their abode with the man of their choice, should he be able to support the expense. It is during this

season of pleasure and idleness that the incurable leprosy of sloth takes lasting possession of these unfortunate creatures.

This is the first phase of degradation that the guilty carelessness of society imposes on an immense number of work-women, born with instincts of modesty and honesty and uprightness.

After a certain time they are deserted by their seducers — perhaps when they are mothers. Or, it may be, that foolish extravagance consigns the imprudent lover to prison, and the young girl finds herself alone, abandoned, without the means of subsistence. Those who have still preserved courage and energy go back to their work — but the examples are very rare. The others, impelled by misery and by habits of indolence, fall into the lowest depths.

And yet we must pity rather than blame them, for the first and virtual cause of their fall has been the insufficient remuneration of labor and strikes.

Another deplorable consequence of this inorganization is the disgust which workmen feel for their employment, in addition to the insufficiency of their wages. And this is quite conceivable, for nothing is done to render their labor attractive, either by variety of occupations, or by honorary rewards, or by proper care, or by remuneration proportionate to the benefits which their toil provides, or by the hope of rest after long years of industry. No — the country thinks not, cares not, either for their wants or their rights.

And yet, to take only one example, machinists and workers in foundries, exposed to boiler explosions and the contact of formidable engines, run every day greater dangers than soldiers in time of war, display rare practical sagacity, and render to industry — and, consequently, to their country — the most incontestable service, during a long and honorable career, if they do not perish by the bursting of a boiler, or have not their limbs crushed by the iron teeth of a machine. In this last case, does the workman receive a recompense equal to that which awaits the soldier's praiseworthy but sterile courage — a place in an asylum for invalids? No. What does the country care about it? And if the master should happen to be ungrateful, the mutilated workman, incapable of further service, may die of want in some corner.

Finally, in our pompous festivals of commerce, do we ever assemble any of the skillful workmen who alone have woven those admirable stuffs, forged and damascened those shining weapons, chiseled those goblets of gold and silver, carved the wood and ivory of that costly furniture, and set those dazzling jewels with such exquisite art? No.

In the obscurity of their garrets, in the midst of a miserable and starving family, hardly able to subsist on their scanty wages, these

workmen have contributed at least one-half to bestow those wonders upon their country, which make its wealth, its glory, and its pride.

A minister of commerce who had the least intelligence of his high functions and duties would require of every factory that exhibits on these occasions, *the selection by vote of a certain number of candidates amongst whom the manufacturer would point out the one that appeared most worthy to represent the working-classes in these great industrial solemnities.*

Would it not be a noble and encouraging example to see the master propose for public recompense and distinction the workman deputed by his peers as amongst the most honest, laborious, and intelligent of his profession? Then one most grievous injustice would disappear, and the virtues of the workman would be stimulated by a generous and noble ambition—he would have an interest in doing well.

Doubtless the manufacturer himself, because of the intelligence he displays, the capital he risks, the establishment he founds, and the good he sometimes does, has a legitimate right to the prizes bestowed upon him. But why is the workman to be rigorously excluded from these rewards, which have so powerful an influence upon the people? Are generals and officers the only ones that receive rewards in the army? And when we have remunerated the captains of this great and powerful army of industry, why should we neglect the privates?

Why for them is there no sign of public gratitude? no kind or consoling word from august lips? Why do we not see in France *a single workman* wearing a medal as a reward for his courageous industry, his long and laborious career? The token, and the little pension attached to it, would be to him a double recompense, justly deserved. But, no! for humble labor that sustains the state, there is only forgetfulness, injustice, indifference, and disdain!

By this neglect of the public, often aggravated by individual selfishness and ingratitude, our workmen are placed in a deplorable situation. Some of them, notwithstanding their incessant toil, lead a life of privations, and die before their time, cursing the social system that rides over them. Others find a temporary oblivion of their ills in destructive intoxication. Others, again,—in great number,—having no interest, no advantage, no moral or physical inducement to do more or better, confine themselves strictly to just that amount of labor which will suffice to earn their wages. Nothing attaches them to their work, because nothing elevates, honors, glorifies it in their eyes. They have no defense against the seductions of indolence; and if, by some chance, they find the means of living awhile in repose, they give way by degrees to habits of laziness and debauchery, and sometimes the worst passions soil forever natures originally willing, healthy, and honest—and all for want of

that protecting and equitable superintendence which should have sustained, encouraged, and recompensed their first worthy and laborious tendencies.

.



We now follow Mother Bunch, who, after seeking for work from the person that usually employed her, went to the Rue de Babylone, to the lodge lately occupied by Adrienne de Cardoville.

PART X

THE CONVENT

CHAPTER I

FLORINE



WHILE the Bacchanal Queen and Sleepinbuff terminated so sadly the most joyous portion of their existence, the seamstress arrived at the door of the summer-house in the Rue de Babylone.

Before ringing, she dried her tears; a new grief weighed upon her spirits. On quitting the tavern, she had gone to the house of the person who usually found her in work; but she was told that she could not have any, because it could be done a third more cheaply by women in prison. Mother Bunch, rather than lose her last resource, offered to take it at the third less; but the linen had been already sent out, and the girl could not hope for employment for a fortnight to come, even if submitting to this reduction of wages. One may conceive the anguish of the poor creature; the prospect before her was to die of hunger, if she would not beg or steal.

As for her visit to the lodge in the Rue de Babylone, it will be explained directly.

She rang the bell timidly; a few minutes after, Florine opened the door to her. The waiting-maid was no longer adorned after the charming taste of Adrienne; on the contrary, she was dressed with an affectation of austere simplicity. She wore a high-necked dress of a dark color, made full enough to conceal the light elegance of her figure. Her bands of jet-black hair were hardly visible beneath the flat border of a starched white cap, very much resembling the head-dress of a nun. Yet,

in spite of this unornamental costume, Florine's pale countenance was still admirably beautiful.

We have said that, placed by former misconduct at the mercy of Rodin and M. d'Aigrigny, Florine had served them as a spy upon her mistress, notwithstanding the marks of kindness and confidence she had received from her. Yet Florine was not entirely corrupted; and she often suffered painful but vain remorse at the thought of the infamous part she was thus obliged to perform.

At sight of Mother Bunch, whom she recognized,—for she had told her the day before of Agricola's arrest and Mademoiselle de Cardoville's madness,—Florine recoiled a step, so much was she moved with pity at the appearance of the young seamstress. In fact, the idea of being thrown out of work in the midst of so many other painful circumstances, had made a terrible impression upon the young work-woman; the traces of recent tears furrowed her cheeks,—without her knowing it, her features expressed the deepest despair,—and she appeared so exhausted, so weak, so overcome, that Florine offered her arm to support her, and said to her kindly:

“Pray walk in and rest yourself; you are very pale, and seem to be ill and fatigued.”

So saying, Florine led her into a small room with fireplace and carpet, and made her sit down in a tapestried arm-chair by the side of a good fire. Georgette and Hebe had been dismissed, and Florine was left alone in care of the house.

When her guest was seated, Florine said to her, with an air of interest:

“Will you not take anything? A little orange flower-water and sugar, warm.”

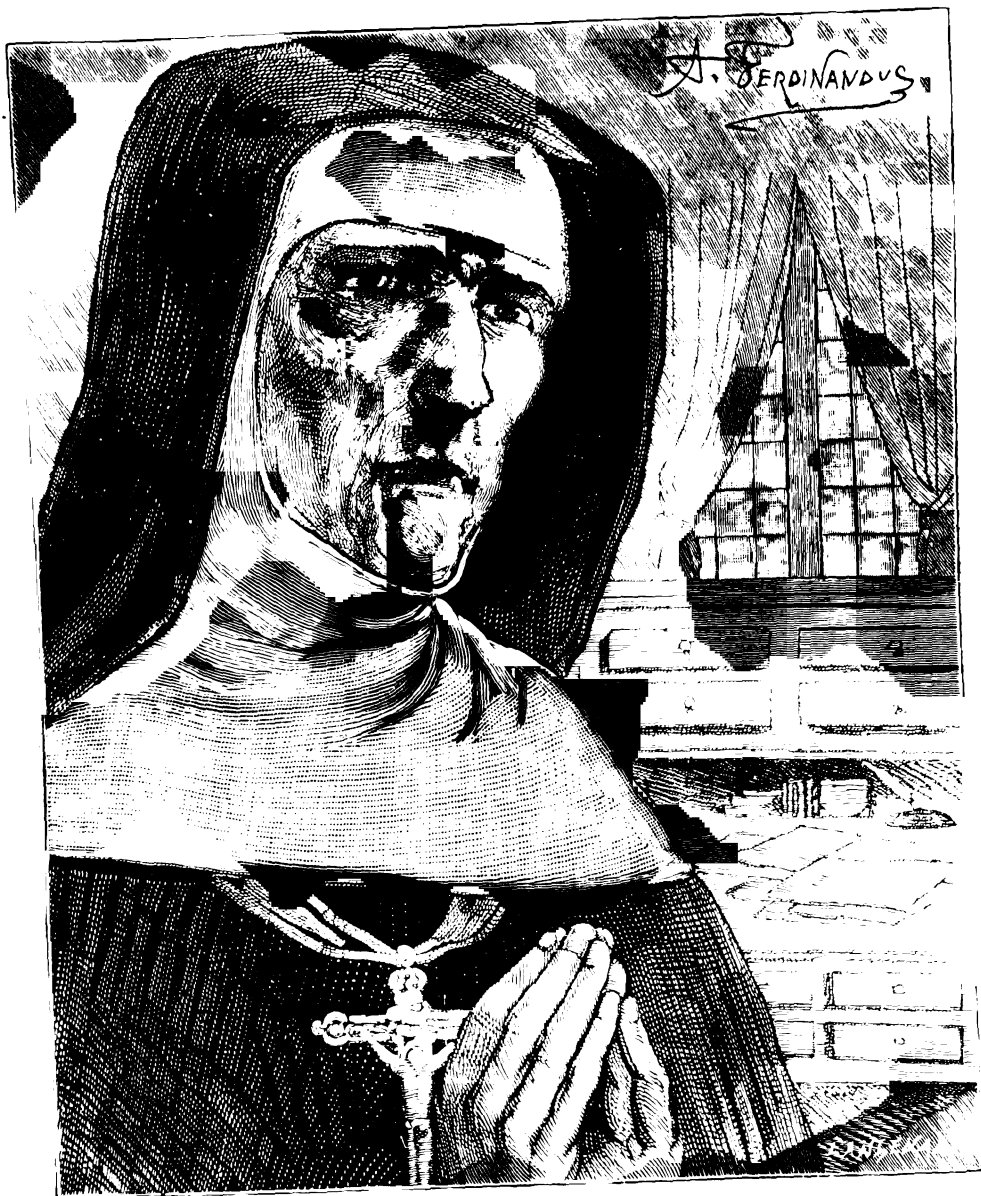
“I thank you, mademoiselle,” said Mother Bunch, with emotion, so easily was her gratitude excited by the least mark of kindness; she felt, too, a pleasing surprise that her poor garments had not been the cause of repugnance or disdain on the part of Florine.

“I thank you, mademoiselle,” said she, “but I only require a little rest, for I come from a great distance. If you will permit me —”

“Pray rest yourself as long as you like, mademoiselle; I am alone in this pavilion since the departure of my poor mistress,”—here Florine blushed and sighed,—“so, pray, make yourself quite at home. Draw near the fire; you will be more comfortable, and—gracious! how wet your feet are! Place them upon this stool.”

The cordial reception given by Florine, her handsome face and agreeable manners, which were not those of an ordinary waiting-maid, forcibly struck Mother Bunch, who, notwithstanding her humble condi-

tion, was peculiarly susceptible to the influence of everything graceful and delicate. Yielding, therefore, to these attractions, the young seam-



stress, generally so timid and sensitive, felt herself almost at her ease with Florine.

"How obliging you are, mademoiselle," said she, in a grateful tone. "I am quite confused with your kindness."

"I wish I could do you some greater service than offer you a place at the fire, mademoiselle. Your appearance is so good and interesting."

"Oh, mademoiselle!" said the other, with simplicity, almost in spite of herself; "it does one so much good to sit by a warm fire." Then, fearing, in her extreme delicacy, that she might be thought capable of abusing the hospitality of her entertainer by unreasonably prolonging her visit, she added:

"The motive that has brought me here is this. Yesterday you informed me that a young workman named Agricola Baudoin had been arrested in this house."

"Alas! yes, mademoiselle. At the moment, too, when my poor mistress was about to render him assistance."

"I am Agricola's adopted sister," resumed Mother Bunch, with a slight blush; "he wrote to me yesterday evening from prison. He begged me to tell his father to come here as soon as possible, in order to inform Mademoiselle de Cardoville that he, Agricola, had important matters to communicate to her, or to any person that she might send; but that he could not venture to mention them in a letter, as he did not know if the correspondence of prisoners might not be read by the governor of the prison."

"What!" said Florine, with surprise; "to my mistress, M. Agricola has something of importance to communicate?"

"Yes, mademoiselle; for up to this time Agricola is ignorant of the great calamity that has befallen Mademoiselle de Cardoville."

"True; the attack was indeed so sudden," said Florine, casting down her eyes, "that no one could have foreseen it."

"It must have been so," answered Mother Bunch; "for when Agricola saw Mademoiselle de Cardoville for the first time, he returned home struck with her grace and delicacy and goodness."

"As were all who approached my mistress," said Florine sorrowfully

"This morning," resumed the sewing-girl, "when, according to Agricola's instructions, I wished to speak to his father on the subject, I found him already gone out, for he also is a prey to great anxieties; but my adopted brother's letter appeared to me so pressing, and to involve something of such consequence to Mademoiselle de Cardoville, who had shown herself so generous toward him, that I came here immediately."

"Unfortunately, as you already know, my mistress is no longer here."

"But is there no member of her family to whom, if I could not speak myself, I might at least send word by you, that Agricola has something to communicate of importance to this young lady?"

"It is strange!" said Florine, reflecting, and without replying. Then, turning toward the seamstress, she added:

"You are quite ignorant of the nature of these revelations?"

"Completely so, mademoiselle; but I know Agricola. He is all honor and truth, and you may believe whatever he affirms. Besides, he would have no interest ——"

"Good gracious!" interrupted Florine suddenly, as if struck with a sudden light; "I have just remembered something. When he was arrested in a hiding-place where my mistress had concealed him, I happened to be close at hand, and M. Agricola said to me in a quick whisper: 'Tell your generous mistress that her goodness to me will not go unrewarded, and that my stay in that hiding-place may not be useless to her.' That was all he could say to me, for they hurried him off instantly. I confess that I saw in those words only the expression of his gratitude, and his hope of proving it one day to my mistress; but, now that I connect them with the letter he has written you ——," said Florine, reflecting.

"Indeed!" remarked Mother Bunch, "there is certainly some connection between his hiding-place here and the important secrets which he wishes to communicate to your mistress or one of her family"

"The hiding-place had neither been inhabited nor visited for some time," said Florine, with a thoughtful air; "M. Agricola may have found therein something of interest to my mistress."

"If his letter had not appeared to me so pressing," resumed the other, "I should not have come hither; but have left him to do so himself, on his release from prison, which now, thanks to the generosity of one of his old fellow-workmen, cannot be very distant. But, not knowing if bail would be accepted to-day, I have wished faithfully to perform his instructions. The generous kindness of your mistress made it my first duty."

Like all persons whose better instincts are still roused from time to time, Florine felt a sort of consolation in doing good whenever she could with impunity,—that is to say, without exposing herself to the inexorable resentments of those on whom she depended. Thanks to Mother Bunch, she might now have an opportunity of rendering a great service to her mistress. She knew enough of the Princess de Saint-Dizier's hatred of her niece, to feel certain that Agricola's communication could not, from its very importance, be made with safety to any but Mademoiselle de Cardoville herself. She therefore said very gravely:

"Listen to me, mademoiselle! I will give you a piece of advice which will, I think, be useful to my poor mistress, but which would be very fatal to me if you did not attend to my recommendations."

"How so, mademoiselle?" said the hunchback, looking at Florine with extreme surprise.

"For the sake of my mistress, M. Agricola must confide to no one, except herself, the important things he has to communicate."

"But, if he cannot see Mademoiselle Adrienne, may he not address himself to some of her family?"

"It is from her family, above all, that he must conceal whatever he knows. Mademoiselle Adrienne may recover, and then M. Agricola can speak to her. But should she never get well again, tell your adopted brother that it is better for him to keep his secret than to place it (which would infallibly happen) at the disposal of the enemies of my mistress."

"I understand you, mademoiselle," said Mother Bunch sadly. "The family of your generous mistress do not love her, and perhaps persecute her."

"I cannot tell you more on this subject now; and, as regards myself, let me conjure you to obtain M. Agricola's promise that he will not mention to any one in the world the step you have taken, or the advice I have given you. The happiness—no, not the happiness," resumed Florine bitterly, as if that were a lost hope, "no, not the happiness, but the peace of my life depends upon your discretion."

"Oh! be satisfied!" said the sewing-girl, both affected and amazed by the sorrowful expression of Florine's countenance; "I will not be ungrateful. No one in the world but Agricola shall know that I have seen you."

"Thank you—thank you, mademoiselle," cried Florine, with emotion.

"Do you thank me?" said the other, astonished to see the large tears roll down her cheeks.

"Yes! I am indebted to you for a moment of pure, unmixed happiness; for I have perhaps rendered a service to my dear mistress, without risking the increase of the troubles that already overwhelm me."

"You are not happy, then?"

"That astonishes you; but, believe me, whatever may be your fate, I would gladly change with you."

"Alas, mademoiselle!" said the seamstress; "you appear to have too good a heart for me to let you entertain such a wish, particularly now."

"What do you mean?"

"I hope sincerely, mademoiselle," proceeded Mother Bunch, with deep sadness, "that you may never know what it is to want work, when labor is your only resource."

"Are you reduced to that extremity?" cried Florine, looking anxiously at the young seamstress, who hung her head and made no answer. She reproached herself in her excessive delicacy with having made a communication which resembled a complaint, though it had only been wrung from her by the thought of her dreadful situation.

"If it is so," went on Florine, "I pity you with all my heart; and yet I know not if my misfortunes are not still greater than yours."

Then, after a moment's reflection, Florine exclaimed suddenly:

"But let me see! If you are really in that position, I think I can procure you some work."

"Is it possible, mademoiselle!" cried Mother Bunch. "I should never have dared to ask you such a service; but your generous offer commands my confidence, and may save me from destruction. I will confess to you that, only this morning, I was thrown out of an employment which enabled me to earn four francs a week."

"Four francs a week!" exclaimed Florine, hardly able to believe what she heard.

"It was little, doubtless," replied the other; "but enough for me. Unfortunately, the person who employed me has found out where it can be done still cheaper."

"Four francs a week!" repeated Florine, deeply touched by so much misery and resignation. "Well! I think I can introduce you to persons who will secure you wages of at least two francs a day"

"I could earn two francs a day? Is it possible?"

"Yes, there is no doubt of it; only, you would have to go out by the day, unless you chose to take a place as servant."

"In my position," said Mother Bunch, with a mixture of timidity and pride, "one has no right, I know, to be over-nice; yet I should prefer to go out by the day, and still more to remain at home, if possible, even though I were to gain less."

"To go out is unfortunately an indispensable condition," said Florine.

"Then I must renounce this hope," answered Mother Bunch timidly; "not that I refuse to go out to work, but those who do so are expected to be decently clad; and I confess without shame, because there is no disgrace in honest poverty, that I have no better clothes than these."

"If that be all," said Florine hastily, "they will find you the means of dressing yourself properly."

Mother Bunch looked at Florine with increasing surprise. These offers were so much above what she could have hoped, and what indeed was generally earned by needle-women, that she could hardly credit them.

"But," resumed she, with hesitation, "why should any one be so generous to me, mademoiselle? How should I deserve such high wages?"

Florine started. A natural impulse of the heart, a desire to be useful to the seamstress, whose mildness and resignation greatly interested her, had led her to make a hasty proposition; she knew at what price would have to be purchased the advantages she proposed, and she now

asked herself if the hunchback would ever accept them on such terms. But Florine had gone too far to recede, and she durst not tell all. She resolved, therefore, to leave the future to chance; and as those who have themselves fallen are little disposed to believe in the infallibility of others, Florine said to herself that perhaps, in the desperate position in which she was, Mother Bunch would not be so scrupulous after all. Therefore she said:

"I see, mademoiselle, that you are astonished at offers so much above what you usually gain; but I must tell you that I am now speaking of a pious institution, founded to procure work for deserving young women. This establishment, which is called St. Mary's Society, undertakes to place them out as servants, or by the day as needle-women. Now, this institution is managed by such charitable persons, that they themselves undertake to supply an outfit, when the young women received under their protection are not sufficiently well clothed to accept the places destined to them."

This plausible explanation of Florine's magnificent offers appeared to satisfy the hearer.

"I can now understand the high wages of which you speak, mademoiselle," resumed she; "only I have no claim to be patronized by the charitable persons who direct this establishment."

"You suffer; you are laborious and honest,—those are sufficient claims; only, I must tell you, they will ask if you perform regularly your religious duties."

"No one loves and blesses God more fervently than I do, mademoiselle," said the hunchback, with mild firmness; "but certain duties are an affair of conscience, and I would rather renounce this patronage than be compelled ——"

"Not the least in the world. Only, as I told you, there are very pious persons at the head of this institution, and you must not be astonished at their questions on such a subject. Make the trial, at all events; what do you risk? If the propositions are suitable, accept them; if, on the contrary, they should appear to touch your liberty of conscience, you can always refuse—your position will not be the worse for it."

Mother Bunch had nothing to object to this reasoning, which left her at perfect freedom and disarmed her of all suspicion.

"On these terms, mademoiselle," said she, "I accept your offer, and thank you with all my heart. But who will introduce me?"

"I will—to-morrow, if you please."

"But they will perhaps desire to make some inquiries about me."

"The venerable Mother Sainte-Perpétue, superior of St. Mary's Convent, where the institution is established, will, I am sure, appreciate

your good qualities without inquiry ; but, if otherwise, she will tell you, and you can easily satisfy her. It is then agreed — to-morrow."

"Shall I call upon you here, mademoiselle ?"

"No ; as I told you before, they must not know that you came here on the part of M. Agricola, and a second visit might be discovered, and excite suspicion. I will come and fetch you in a coach ; where do you live ?"

"At No. 3 Rue Brise-Miche ; as you are pleased to give yourself so much trouble, mademoiselle, you have only to ask the dyer, who acts as porter, to call down Mother Bunch."

"Bunch ?" said Florine, with surprise.

"Yes, mademoiselle," answered the seamstress, with a sad smile ; "it is the name every one gives me. And you see," added the hunchback, unable to restrain a tear, "it is because of my ridiculous infirmity, to which this name alludes, that I dread going out to work among strangers, because there are so many people who laugh at one, without knowing the pain they occasion. But," continued she, drying her eyes, "I have no choice, and must make up my mind to it."

Florine, deeply affected, took the speaker's hand and said to her :

"Do not fear. Misfortunes like yours must inspire compassion, not ridicule. May I not inquire for you by your real name ?"

"It is Madelaine Soliveau ; but I repeat, mademoiselle, that you had better ask for Mother Bunch, as I am hardly known by any other name."

"I will, then, be in the Rue Brise-Miche to-morrow, at twelve o'clock."

"Oh, mademoiselle ! how can I ever requite your goodness ?"

"Don't speak of it ; I only hope my interference may be of use to you. But of this you must judge for yourself. As for M. Agricola, do not answer his letter ; wait till he is out of prison, and then tell him to keep his secret till he can see my poor mistress."

"And where is the dear young lady now ?"

"I cannot tell you. I do not know where they took her, when she was attacked with this frenzy. You will expect me to-morrow ?"

"Yes — to-morrow," said Mother Bunch.

The convent whither Florine was to conduct the hunchback contained the daughters of Marshal Simon, and was next door to the lunatic asylum of Dr. Baleinier, in which Adrienne de Cardoville was confined.

CHAPTER II

MOTHER SAINTE-PERPÉTUE



ST. MARY'S CONVENT, whither the daughters of Marshal Simon had been conveyed, was a large, old building, the vast garden of which was on the Boulevard de l'Hôpital, one of the most retired places in Paris, particularly at this period.

The following scenes took place on the 12th of February, the eve of the fatal day on which the members of the family of Rennepont, the last descendants of the sister of the Wandering Jew, were to meet together in the Rue St. François.

St. Mary's Convent was a model of perfect regularity. A superior council, composed of influential ecclesiastics, with Father D'Aigrigny for president, and of women of great reputed piety, at the head of whom was the Princess de Saint-Dizier, frequently assembled in deliberation, to consult on the means of extending and strengthening the secret and powerful influence of this establishment, which had already made remarkable progress. Skillful combinations and deep foresight had presided at the foundation of St. Mary's Convent, which, in consequence of numerous donations, possessed already real estate to a great extent, and was daily augmenting its acquisitions. The religious community was only a pretext; but, thanks to an extensive connection, kept up by means of the most decided members of the ultramontane (*i. e.*, high-church) party, a great number of rich orphans were placed in the convent, there to receive a solid, austere, religious education, very preferable, it was said, to the frivolous instruction which might be had in the fashionable boarding-schools, infected by the corruption of the age. To widows also, and lone women who happened, moreover, to be rich, the convent offered a sure asylum from the dangers and temptations of the world; in this peaceful retreat they enjoyed a delightful calm, and secured their salvation while surrounded by the most tender and affectionate attentions. Nor was this all. Mother Sainte-Perpétue, the

superior of the convent, undertook in the name of the institution to procure for the faithful, who wished to preserve the interior of their houses from the depravity of the age, companions for aged ladies, domestic serv-



ants, or needle-women working by the day, all selected persons whose morality could be warranted. Nothing would seem more worthy of sympathy and encouragement than such an institution; but we shall

presently unveil the vast and dangerous network of intrigue concealed under these charitable and holy appearances.

The lady-superior, Mother Sainte-Perpétue, was a tall woman of about forty years of age, clad in a stuff dress of the Carmelite tan color, and wearing a long rosary at her waist; a white cap under the chin and a long black veil closely encircled her thin, sallow face. A number of deep wrinkles had impressed their transverse furrows in her forehead of yellow ivory; her marked and prominent nose was bent like the beak of a bird of prey; her black eye was knowing and piercing; the expression of her countenance was at once intelligent, cold, and firm.

In the general management of the pecuniary affairs of the community, Mother Sainte-Perpétue would have been a match for the most cunning attorney. When women are possessed of what is called a talent for business, and apply to it their keen penetration, their indefatigable perseverance, their prudent dissimulation, and, above all, that quick and exact insight which is natural to them, the results are often prodigious. To Mother Sainte-Perpétue, a woman of the coolest and strongest intellect, the management of the vast transactions of the community was mere child's play. No one knew better how to purchase a depreciated property, to restore it to its former value, and then sell it with advantage; the price of stock, the rate of exchange, the current value of the shares in the different companies, were all familiar to her; she had never yet been known to make a bad speculation when the question was to invest any of the funds which were given by pious souls for the purposes of the convent. She had established in the house the utmost order and discipline, and, above all, an extreme economy. The constant aim of all her efforts was to enrich, not herself, but the community she directed; for the spirit of association, when it becomes a collective egotism, gives to corporations the faults and vices of an individual.

Thus a congregation may dote upon power and money, just as a miser loves them for their own sake. But it is chiefly with regard to estates that congregations act like a single man. They dream of landed property; it is their fixed idea, their fruitful monomania. They pursue it with their most sincere and warm and tender wishes. The first estate is to a rising little community what the wedding-trousseau is to a young bride, his first horse to a youth, his first success to a poet, to a gay girl, her first fifty-guinea shawl; because, after all, in this material age, an estate gives a certain rank to a society on the Religious Exchange, and has so much the more effect upon the simple-minded, that all these partnerships in the work of salvation, which end by becoming immensely rich, begin with modest poverty as social stock-in-trade.

and charity toward their neighbors as security reserve fund. We may therefore imagine what bitter and ardent rivalry must exist between the different congregations with regard to the various estates that each can lay claim to; with what ineffable satisfaction the richer society crushes the poorer beneath its inventory of houses and farms and paper securities! Envy and hateful jealousy, rendered still more irritable by the leisure of a cloistered life, are the necessary consequences of such a comparison; and yet nothing is less Christian — in the adorable acceptance of that divine word — nothing has less in common with the true, essential, and religiously social spirit of the Gospel than this insatiable ardor to acquire wealth by every possible means — this dangerous avidity, which is far from being atoned for, in the eyes of public opinion, by a few paltry alms, bestowed in the narrow spirit of exclusion and intolerance.

Mother Sainte-Perpétue was seated before a large rolling desk, in the center of an apartment simply but comfortably furnished. An excellent fire burned within the marble chimney, and a soft carpet covered the floor. The superior, to whom all letters addressed to the sisters or the boarders were every day delivered, had just been opening the first, according to her acknowledged right, and carefully unsealing the second, without their knowing it — a right she ascribed to herself, of course, with a view to the salvation of those dear creatures; and partly, perhaps, a little to make herself acquainted with their correspondence, for she also had imposed on herself the duty of reading all letters that were sent from the convent, before they were put into the post. The traces of this pious and innocent inquisition were easily effaced, for the good mother possessed a whole arsenal of steel tools, some very sharp, to cut the paper imperceptibly round the seal; others, pretty little rods, to be slightly heated and rolled round the edge of the seal, when the letter had been read and replaced in its envelope, so that the wax, spreading as it melted, might cover the first incision. Moreover, from a praiseworthy feeling of justice and equality, there was in the arsenal of the good mother a little kettle of the most ingenious construction, the damp and dissolving vapor of which was reserved for the letters humbly and modestly secured with wafers. Thus softened, they yielded to the least effort, without any tearing of the paper.

According to the importance of the revelations which she thus gleaned from the writers of the letters, the superior took notes more or less extensive. She was interrupted in this investigation by two gentle taps at the bolted door.

Mother Sainte-Perpétue immediately let down the sliding cylinder of her cabinet so as to cover the secret arsenal, and went to open the

door with a grave and solemn air. A lay sister came to announce to her that the Princess de Saint-Dizier was waiting for her in the parlor, and that Mademoiselle Florine, accompanied by a young girl, deformed and badly dressed, was waiting at the door of the little corridor.

"Introduce the princess first," said Mother Sainte-Perpétue. And with charming forethought, she drew an arm-chair to the fire.

Madame de Saint-Dizier entered.

Without pretensions to juvenile coquetry, still the princess was tastefully and elegantly dressed. She wore a black velvet bonnet of the most fashionable make, a large blue cashmere shawl, and a black satin dress, trimmed with sable to match the fur of her muff.

"To what good fortune am I again to-day indebted for the honor of your visit, my dear daughter?" said the superior graciously.

"A very important recommendation, my dear mother, though I am in a great hurry I am expected at the house of his eminence, and have, unfortunately, only a few minutes to spare. I have again to speak of the two orphans who occupied our attention so long yesterday."

"They continue to be kept separate, according to your wish; and this separation has had such an effect upon them that I have been obliged to send this morning for Dr Baleinier from his asylum. He found much fever joined to great depression, and, singular enough, absolutely the same symptoms in both cases. I have again questioned these unfortunate creatures, and have been quite confounded and terrified to find them heathens."

"It was, you see, very urgent to place them in your care. But to the subject of my visit, my dear mother: We have just learned the unexpected return of the soldier who brought these girls to France, and was thought to be absent for some days; but he is in Paris, and, notwithstanding his age, a man of extraordinary boldness, enterprise, and energy. Should he discover that the girls are here (which, however, is fortunately almost impossible), in his rage at seeing them removed from his impious influence he would be capable of anything. Therefore, let me entreat you, my dear mother, to redouble your precautions, that no one may effect an entrance by night. This quarter of the town is so deserted!"

"Be satisfied, my dear daughter; we are sufficiently guarded. Our porter and gardeners, all well armed, make a round every night on the side of the Boulevard de l'Hôpital. The walls are high, and furnished with spikes at the more accessible places. But I thank you, my dear daughter, for having warned me. We will redouble our precautions."

"Particularly this night, my dear mother."

"Why so?"

"Because if this infernal soldier has the audacity to attempt such a thing, it will be this very night."

"How do you know, my dear daughter?"

"We have information which makes us certain of it," replied the princess, with a slight embarrassment, which did not escape the notice of the superior, though she was too crafty and reserved to appear to see it; only she suspected that many things were concealed from her.

"This night, then," resumed Mother Sainte-Perpétue, "we will be more than ever on our guard. But as I have the pleasure of seeing you, my dear daughter, I will take the opportunity to say a word or two on the subject of that marriage we mentioned."

"Yes, my dear mother," said the princess hastily, "for it is very important. The young Baron de Brisville is a man full of ardent devotion in these times of revolutionary impiety; he performs his religious duties openly, and is able to render us great services. He is listened to in the chamber, and does not want for a sort of aggressive and provoking eloquence; I know not any one whose tone is more insolent with regard to his faith, and the plan is a good one, for this cavalier and open manner of speaking of sacred things raises and excites the curiosity of the indifferent. Circumstances are happily such that he may show the most audacious violence toward our enemies, without the least danger to himself, which, of course, redoubles his ardor as a would-be martyr. In a word, he is altogether ours, and we, in return, must bring about this marriage. You know, besides, my dear mother, that he proposes to offer a donation of a hundred thousand francs to St. Mary's the day he gains possession of the fortune of Mademoiselle Baudricourt."

"I have never doubted the excellent intentions of M. de Brisville with regard to an institution which merits the sympathy of all pious persons," answered the superior discreetly; "but I did not expect to meet with so many obstacles on the part of the young lady"

"How is that?"

"This girl, whom I always believed a most simple, submissive, timid, almost idiotic person, instead of being delighted with this proposal of marriage, asks time to consider!"

"It is really pitiable!"

"She opposes to me an inert resistance. It is in vain for me to speak severely, and tell her that, having no parents or friends, and being absolutely confided to my care, she ought to see with my eyes, hear with my ears, and when I affirm that this union is suitable in all respects, give her adhesion to it without delay or reflection."

"No doubt. It would be impossible to speak more sensibly."

"She answers that she wishes to see M. de Brisville, and know his character before being engaged."

"It is absurd—since you undertake to answer for his morality, and esteem this a proper marriage."

"Therefore, I remarked to Mademoiselle Baudricourt, this morning, that till now I had only employed gentle persuasion, but that, if she forced me to it, I should be obliged, in her own interest, to act with rigor, to conquer so much obstinacy; that I should have to separate her from her companions, and to confine her closely in a cell, until she made up her mind, after all, to consult her own happiness, and—marry an honorable man."

"And these menaces, my dear mother?"

"Will, I hope, have a good effect. She kept up a correspondence with an old school-friend in the country. I have put a stop to this, for it appeared to me dangerous. She is now under my sole influence, and I hope we shall attain our ends; but you see, my dear daughter, it is never without crosses and difficulties that we succeed in doing good!"

"And I feel certain that M. de Brisville will even go beyond his first promise, and I will pledge myself for him, that, should he marry Mademoiselle Baudricourt——"

"You know, my dear daughter," said the superior, interrupting the princess, "that if I were myself concerned, I would refuse everything; but to give to this institution is to give to Heaven, and I cannot prevent M. de Brisville from augmenting the amount of his good works. Then, you see, we are exposed to a sad disappointment."

"What is that, my dear mother?"

"The Sacred Heart Convent disputes an estate with us that would have suited us exactly. Really, some people are quite insatiable! I gave the lady-superior my opinion upon it pretty freely."

"She told me as much," answered Madame de Saint-Dizier, "and laid the blame on the steward."

"Oh! so you see her, my dear daughter?" exclaimed the superior, with an air of great surprise.

"I met her at the bishop's," answered Madame de Saint-Dizier, with a slight degree of hesitation, that Mother Sainte-Perpétue did not appear to notice.

"I really do not know," resumed the latter, "why our establishment should excite so violently the jealousy of the Sacred Heart. There is not an evil report that they have not spread with regard to St. Mary's Convent. Certain persons are always offended by the success of their neighbors!"

"Come, my dear mother," said the princess, in a conciliating tone, "we must hope that the donation of M. de Brisville will enable you to outbid the Sacred Heart. This marriage will have a double advantage, you see, my dear mother: it will place a large fortune at the disposal of a man who is devoted to us, and who will employ it as we wish; and it will also greatly increase the importance of his position as our defender, by the addition to his income of one hundred thousand francs a year. We shall have at length an organ worthy of our cause, and shall no longer be obliged to look for defenders amongst such people as that Dumoulin."

"There is great power and much learning in the writings of the man you name. It is the style of a Saint Bernard, in wrath at the impiety of the age."

"Alas, my dear mother! if you only knew what a strange Saint Bernard this Dumoulin is! But I will not offend your ears; all I can tell you is, that such defenders would compromise the most sacred cause. Adieu, my dear mother! pray redouble your precautions to-night—the return of this soldier is alarming."

"Be quite satisfied, my dear daughter! Oh! I forgot. Mademoiselle Florine begged me to ask you a favor. It is, to let her enter your service. You know the fidelity she displayed in watching your unfortunate niece; I think that, by rewarding her in this way, you will attach her to you completely, and I shall feel grateful on her account."

"If you interest yourself the least in the world in Florine, my dear mother, the thing is done. I will take her into my service. And now, it strikes me, she may be more useful than I thought."

"A thousand thanks, my dear daughter, for such obliging attention to my request. I hope we shall soon meet again. The day after to-morrow, at two o'clock, we have a long conference with his eminence and the bishop; do not forget!"

"No, my dear mother; I shall take care to be exact. Only, pray, redouble your precautions to-night, for fear of a great scandal!"

After respectfully kissing the hand of the superior, the princess went out by the great door, which led to an apartment opening on the principal staircase.

Some minutes after, Florine entered the room by another way. The superior was seated, and Florine approached her with timid humility.

"Did you meet the Princess de Saint-Dizier?" asked Mother Sainte-Perpétue.

"No, mother; I was waiting in the passage, where the windows look out on the garden."

"The princess takes you into her service from to-day," said the superior.

Florine made a movement of surprise and annoyance and exclaimed :

"Me, mother ! but ——"

"I asked her in your name, and you have only to accept," answered the other imperiously.

"But, mother, I had entreated you ——"

"I tell you, that you accept the offer," said the superior, in so firm and positive a tone that Florine cast down her eyes, and replied in a low voice :

"I accept."

"It is in M. Rodin's name that I give you this order."

"I thought so, mother," replied Florine sadly ; "on what conditions am I to serve the princess ?"

"On the same conditions as those on which you served her niece."

Florine shuddered, and said :

"I am, then, to make frequent secret reports with regard to the princess ?"

"You will observe, you will remember, and you will give an account."

"Yes, my mother."

"You will, above all, direct your attention to the visits that the princess may receive from the lady-superior of the Sacred Heart. You must try and listen, for we have to preserve the princess from evil influences."

"I will obey, my mother."

"You will also try and discover why two young orphans have been brought hither, and recommended to be severely treated by Madame Grivois, the confidential waiting-woman of the princess."

"Yes, mother."

"Which must not prevent you from remembering anything else that may be worthy of remark. To-morrow I will give you particular instructions upon another subject."

"It is well, mother."

"If you conduct yourself in a satisfactory manner, and execute faithfully the instructions of which I speak, you will soon leave the princess to enter the service of a young bride. It will be an excellent and lasting situation—always on the same conditions. It is, therefore, perfectly understood that you have asked me to recommend you to Madame de Saint-Dizier."

"Yes, mother ; I shall remember."

"Who is this deformed young girl that accompanies you ?"

"A poor creature without any resource, very intelligent and with an education above her class ; she works at her needle, but is at present without employment and reduced to the last extremity. I have made inquiries about her this morning ; she has an excellent character."



ADRIENNE AND ROSE SIMON.

"She is ugly and deformed, you say?"

"She has an interesting countenance, but she is deformed."

The superior appeared pleased at this information, and added, after a moment's reflection:

"She appears intelligent?"

"Very intelligent."

"And is absolutely without resources?"

"Yes, without any."

"Is she pious?"

"She does not practice."

"No matter," said the superior to herself; "if she be intelligent, that will suffice." Then she resumed aloud:

"Do you know if she is a good work-woman?"

"I believe so, mother"

The superior rose, took a register from a shelf, appeared to be looking into it attentively for some time, and then said, as she replaced it:

"Fetch in this young girl, and go and wait for me in the linen-room."

"Deformed, intelligent, clever at her needle," said the superior, reflecting; "she will excite no suspicion. We must see."

In about a minute Florine returned with Mother Bunch, whom she introduced to the superior, and then discreetly withdrew. The young seamstress was agitated, trembling, and much troubled, for she could, as it were, hardly believe a discovery which she had chanced to make during Florine's absence.

It was not without a vague sense of terror that the hunchback remained alone with the lady-superior.

CHAPTER III

THE TEMPTATION

THIS was the cause of Mother Bunch's emotion. Florine, when she went to see the superior, had left the young seamstress in a passage supplied with benches and forming a sort of antechamber on the first story. Being alone, the girl had mechanically approached a window which looked upon the convent garden, shut in by a half-demolished wall and terminating at one end in an open paling. This wall was connected with a chapel that was still building, and bordered on the garden of a neighboring house.

The sewing-girl saw at one of the windows on the ground-floor of this house—a grated window, still more remarkable by the sort of tent-like awning above it—a young female, with her eyes fixed upon the convent, making signs with her hand, at once encouraging and affectionate. From the window where she stood, Mother Bunch could not see to whom these signs were addressed; but she admired the rare beauty of the girl, the brilliancy of her complexion, the shining blackness of her large eyes, the sweet and benevolent smile which lingered on her lips. There was, no doubt, some answer to her graceful and expressive pantomime, for, by a movement full of elegance, the girl laid her left hand on her bosom and waved her right, which seemed to indicate that her heart flew toward the place on which she kept her eyes.

One faint sunbeam, piercing the clouds, came at this moment to play with the tresses of the pale countenance which, now held close to the bars of the window, was suddenly, as it were, illuminated by the dazzling reflection of her splendid golden hair. At sight of that charming face, set in its admirable frame of red curls, Mother Bunch started involuntarily; the thought of Mademoiselle de Cardoville crossed her mind, and she felt persuaded (nor was she, indeed, mistaken) that the protectress of Agricola was before her.

On thus beholding, in that gloomy asylum, this young lady, so marvelously beautiful, and remembering the delicate kindness with which a few days before she had received Agricola in her luxurious little palace of dazzling splendor, the workgirl felt her heart sink within her. She believed Adrienne insane; and yet, as she looked attentively at her, it seemed as if intelligence and grace animated that adorable countenance. Suddenly, Mademoiselle de Cardoville laid her fingers upon her lips, blew a couple of kisses in the direction toward which she had been looking, and all at once disappeared.

Reflecting upon the important revelations which Agricola had to make to Mademoiselle de Cardoville, Mother Bunch regretted bitterly that she had no means of approaching her; for she felt sure that, if the young lady were mad, the present was a lucid interval.

She was yet absorbed in these uneasy reflections when she saw Florine return, accompanied by one of the nuns. Mother Bunch was obliged, therefore, to keep silence with regard to the discovery she had made, and soon after she found herself in the superior's presence.

This latter, after a rapid and searching examination of the countenance of the young work-woman, judged her appearance so timid, gentle, and honest that she thought she might repose full confidence in the information given by Florine.

"My dear daughter," said Mother Sainte-Perpétue, in an affectionate voice, "Florine has told me in what a cruel situation you are placed. Is it true that you are entirely without work?"

"Alas! yes, madame."

"Call me mother, my dear daughter; that name is dearer to me, and it is the rule of our house. I need not ask you what are your principles?"

"I have always lived honestly by my labor, mother," answered the girl, with a simplicity at once dignified and modest.

"I believe you, my dear daughter, and I have good reasons for so doing. We must thank the Lord, who has delivered you from temptation; but tell me, are you clever at your trade?"

"I do my best, mother, and have always satisfied my employers. If you please to try me, you will be able to judge."

"Your affirmation is sufficient, my dear daughter. You prefer, I think, to go out by the day?"

"Mademoiselle Florine told me, mother, that I could not have work at home."

"Why, no — not for the present, my child. If hereafter an opportunity should offer, I will think of it. Just now I have this to propose to you. A very respectable old lady has asked me to recommend to her a

needle-woman by the day ; introduced by me, you would certainly suit her. The institution will undertake to clothe you becomingly, and this advance we shall retain by degrees out of your wages, for you will look to us for payment. We propose to give you two francs a day ; does that appear to you sufficient ? ”

“ Oh, mother ! it is much more than I could have expected.”

“ You will, moreover, only be occupied from nine o'clock in the morning till six in the evening ; you will thus have still some off hours, of which you might make use. You see, the situation is not a hard one.”

“ Oh ! quite the contrary, mother.”

“ I must tell you, first of all, with whom the institution intends to place you. It is with a widow lady, named Madame de Brémont, a person of the most steadfast piety. In her house I hope you will meet with none but excellent examples. If it should be otherwise you can come and inform me.”

“ How so, mother ? ” said the sewing-girl, with surprise.

“ Listen to me, my dear daughter,” said Mother Sainte-Perpétue, in a tone ever more and more affectionate ; “ the institution of St. Mary has a double end in view. You perfectly understand that, if it is our duty to give to masters and mistresses every possible security as to the morality of the persons that we place in their families, we are likewise bound to give to the persons that we so place out every possible security as to the morality of their employers.”

“ Nothing can be more just and of a wiser foresight, mother.”

“ Naturally, my dear daughter ; for even as a servant of bad morals may cause the utmost trouble in a respectable family, so the bad conduct of a master or mistress may have the most baneful influence on the persons who serve them, or who come to work in their houses. Now, it is to offer a mutual guarantee to good masters and honest servants that we have founded this institution.”

“ Oh, madame ! ” cried Mother Bunch, with simplicity ; “ such designs merit the thanks and blessings of every one.”

“ And blessings do not fail us, my dear daughter, because we perform our promises. Thus, an interesting work-woman — such as you, for example — is placed with persons that we suppose irreproachable. Should she, however, perceive on the part of her employers, or on that of the persons who frequent the house, any irregularity of morals, any tendency to what would offend her modesty or shock her religious principles, she should immediately give us a detailed account of the circumstances that have caused her alarm. Nothing can be more proper, don't you think so ? ”

"Yes, mother," answered Mother Bunch timidly, for she began to find this provision somewhat singular.

"Then," resumed the superior, "if the case appears a serious one, we exhort our befriended one to observe what passes more attentively, so as to convince herself whether she had really reason to be alarmed. She makes a new report to us, and should it confirm our first fears, faithful to our pious guardianship, we withdraw her instantly from the house. Moreover, as the majority of our young people, notwithstanding their innocence and virtue, have not always sufficient experience to distinguish what may be injurious to their soul's health, we think it greatly to their interest that they should confide to us once a week, as a child would to her mother, either in person or by letter, whatever has chanced to occur in the house in which we have placed them. Then we can judge for them, whether to withdraw them or not. We have already about a hundred persons, companions to ladies, young women in shops, servants, and needle-women by the day, whom we have placed in a great number of families, and, for the interest of all, we have every reason to congratulate ourselves on this mode of proceeding. You understand me, do you not, my dear daughter?"

"Yes—yes, mother," said the seamstress, more and more embarrassed. She had too much uprightness and sagacity not to perceive that this plan of mutually insuring the morality of masters and servants resembled a vast spy-system brought home to the domestic hearth and carried on by the members of the institution almost without their knowledge, for it would have been difficult to disguise more skillfully the employment for which they were trained.

"If I have entered into these long details, my dear daughter," resumed Mother Sainte-Perpétue, taking the hearer's silence for consent, "it is that you may not suppose yourself obliged to remain in the house in question, if, against our expectation, you should not find there holy and pious examples. I believe Madame de Brémont's house to be a pure and godly place; only I have heard (though I will not believe it) that Madame de Brémont's daughter, Madame de Noisy, who has lately come to reside with her, is not so exemplary in her conduct as could be desired, that she does not fulfill regularly her religious duties, and that, during the absence of her husband, who is now in America, she receives visits, unfortunately too frequent, from one M. Hardy, a rich manufacturer."

At the name of Agricola's master, Mother Bunch could not suppress a movement of surprise, and also blushed slightly

The superior naturally mistook this surprise and confusion for a proof of the modest susceptibility of the young seamstress, and added:

"I have told you all this, my dear daughter, that you might be on your guard. I have even mentioned reports that I believe to be completely erroneous, for the daughter of Madame de Brémont has always had such good examples before her that she cannot have so forgotten them. But, being in the house from morning to night, you will be able, better than any one, to discover if these reports have any foundation in truth. Should it unfortunately so turn out, my dear daughter, you would come and confide to me all the circumstances that have led you to such a conclusion; and, should I then agree in your opinion, I would withdraw you instantly from the house—for the piety of the mother would not compensate sufficiently for the deplorable example of the daughter's conduct. For, as soon as you form part of the institution, I am responsible for your salvation, and, in case your delicacy should oblige you to leave Madame de Brémont's, as you might be some time without employment, the institution will allow you, if satisfied with your zeal and conduct, one franc a day till we could find you another place. You see, my dear daughter, that you have everything to gain with us. It is therefore agreed that the day after to-morrow you go to Madame de Brémont's."

Mother Bunch found herself in a very hard position. Sometimes she thought that her first suspicions were confirmed, and, notwithstanding her timidity, her pride felt hurt at the supposition that, because they knew her poor, they should believe her capable of selling herself as a spy for the sake of high wages. Sometimes, on the contrary, her natural delicacy revolted at the idea that a woman of the age and condition of the superior could condescend to make a proposition so disgraceful both to the accepter and the proposer, and she reproached herself with her first doubts, and asked herself if the superior had not wished to try her before employing her, to see if her probity would enable her to resist a comparatively brilliant offer. Mother Bunch was naturally so inclined to think well of every one that she made up her mind to this last conclusion, saying to herself that if, after all, she were deceived, it would be the least offensive mode of refusing these unworthy offers. With a movement, exempt from all haughtiness, but expressive of natural dignity, the young work-woman raised her head, which she had hitherto held humbly cast down, looked the superior full in the face, that the latter might read in her countenance the sincerity of her words, and said to her in a slightly agitated voice, forgetting this time to call her "mother":

"Ah, madame! I cannot blame you for exposing me to such a trial. You see that I am very poor, and I have yet done nothing to command your confidence. But, believe me, poor as I am, I would never stoop to

so despicable an action as that which you have thought fit to propose to me, no doubt to assure yourself, by my refusal, that I am worthy of your kindness. No, no, madame — I could never bring myself to be a spy at any price”



She pronounced these last words with so much animation that her cheeks became slightly flushed. The superior had too much tact and experience not to perceive the sincerity of the words. Thinking her-

self lucky that the young girl should put this construction upon the affair, she smiled upon her affectionately and stretched out her arms to her, saying:

"Well, well! my dear daughter. Come and embrace me!"

"Mother — I am really confused — with so much kindness ——"

"No — you deserve it; your words are so full of truth and honesty. Only be persuaded that I have not put you to any trial, because there is no resemblance between the act of a spy and the marks of filial confidence that we require of our members for the sake of watching over their morals. But certain persons — I see you are of the number, my dear daughter — have such fixed principles and so mature a judgment that they can do without our advice and guardianship, and can appreciate themselves whatever might be dangerous to their salvation. I will therefore leave the entire responsibility to yourself, and only ask you for such communications as you may think proper to make."

"Oh, madame! how good you are!" said poor Mother Bunch; for she was not aware of the thousand devices of the monastic spirit, and thought herself already sure of gaining just wages honorably

"It is not goodness — but justice!" answered Mother Sainte-Perpétue, whose tone was becoming more and more affectionate. "Too much tenderness cannot be shown to pious young women like you, whom poverty has only purified, because they have always faithfully observed the divine laws."

"Mother ——"

"One last question, my child! How many times a month do you approach the Lord's table?"

"Madame," replied the hunchback, "I have not taken the sacrament since my first communion, eight years ago. I am hardly able, by working every day and all day long, to earn my bread. I have no time ——"

"Gracious Heaven!" cried the superior, interrupting, and clasping her hands with all the signs of painful astonishment. "Is it possible! you do not *practice*?"

"Alas, madame! I tell you that I have no time," answered Mother Bunch, looking disconcertedly at Mother Sainte-Perpétue.

"I am grieved, my dear daughter," said the latter sorrowfully, after a moment's silence, "but I told you that, as we place our friends in none but pious houses, so we are asked to recommend none but pious persons who practice their religious duties. It is one of the indispensable conditions of our institution. It will therefore, to my great regret, be impossible for me to employ you as I had hoped. If, hereafter, you should renounce your present indifference to those duties, we will then see."

"Madame," said Mother Bunch, her heart swollen with tears, for she was thus forced to abandon a cheering hope, "I beg pardon for having detained you so long, for nothing."

"It is I, my dear daughter, who regret not being able to attach you to the institution; but I am not altogether hopeless that a person already so worthy of interest will one day deserve by her piety the lasting support of religious people. Adieu, my dear daughter! go in peace, and may God be merciful to you until the day that you return with your whole heart to him!"

So saying, the superior rose and conducted her visitor to the door, with all the forms of the most maternal kindness. At the moment she crossed the threshold, she said to her:

"Follow the passage, go down a few steps, and knock at the second door on the right hand. It is the linen-room, and there you will find Florine. She will show you the way out. Adieu, my dear daughter!"

As soon as Mother Bunch had left the presence of the superior, her tears, until now restrained, gushed forth abundantly. Not wishing to appear before Florine and the nuns in this state, she stopped a moment at one of the windows to dry her eyes.

As she looked mechanically toward the window of the next house, where she fancied she had seen Adrienne de Cardoville, she beheld the latter come from a door in the building, and advance rapidly toward the open paling that separated the two gardens. At the same instant, and to her great astonishment, Mother Bunch saw one of the two sisters, whose disappearance had caused the despair of Dagobert, with pale and dejected countenance approach the fence that separated her from Made-moiselle de Cardoville, trembling with fear and anxiety, as though she dreaded to be discovered.

CHAPTER IV

MOTHER BUNCH AND MADemoisELLE DE CARDOVILLE



AGITATED, attentive, uneasy, leaning from one of the convent windows, the workgirl followed with her eyes the movements of Mademoiselle de Cardoville and Rose Simon, whom she so little expected to find together in such a place.

The orphan, approaching close to the fence which separated the nunnery garden from that of Dr. Baleinier's asylum, spoke a few words to Adrienne, whose features at once expressed astonishment, indignation, and pity. At this juncture a nun came running, and looking right and left as though anxiously seeking for some one; then, perceiving Rose, who timidly pressed close to the paling, she seized her by the arm and seemed to scold her severely, and notwithstanding some energetic words addressed to her by Mademoiselle de Cardoville, she hastily carried off the orphan, who, with weeping eyes, turned several times to look back at Adrienne; while the latter, after showing the interest she took in her by expressive gestures, turned away suddenly, as if to conceal her tears.

The passage in which Mother Bunch stood during this touching scene was situated on the first story. The thought immediately occurred to the seamstress to go down to the ground-floor and try and get into the garden, so that she might have an opportunity of speaking to the fair girl with the golden hair and ascertaining if it were really Mademoiselle de Cardoville, to whom, if she found her in a lucid interval, she might say that Agricola had things of the greatest importance to communicate, but that he did not know how to inform her of them.

The day was advancing, the sun was on its decline, and fearing that Florine would be tired of waiting for her, Mother Bunch made haste to act; with a light step, listening anxiously as she went, she reached the end of the passage, where the three or four stairs led down to the landing-place of the linen-room and then formed a spiral descent to the ground-floor. Hearing voices in the linen-room, the seamstress hastened

down the stairs, and found herself in a long passage, in the center of which was a glass door, opening on that part of the garden reserved for the superior. A path, bordered by a high box-hedge, sheltered her from the gaze of curious eyes, and she crept along it till she reached the open paling, which, at this spot, separated the convent garden from that of Dr. Baleinier's asylum. She saw Mademoiselle de Cardoville a few steps from her, seated, and with her arm resting upon a rustic bench.

The firmness of Adrienne's character had for a moment been shaken by fatigue, astonishment, fright, despair, on the terrible night when she had been taken to the asylum by Dr. Baleinier; and the latter, taking a diabolical advantage of her weakness and despondency, had succeeded for a moment in making her doubt of her own sanity. But the calm which necessarily follows the most painful and violent emotions, combined with the reflection and reasoning of a clear and subtle intellect, soon convinced Adrienne of the groundlessness of the fears inspired by the crafty doctor. She no longer believed that it could even be a mistake on the part of the man of science. She saw clearly in the conduct of this man, in which detestable hypocrisy was united with rare audacity, and both served by a skill no less remarkable, that M. Baleinier was, in fact, the blind instrument of the Princess de Saint-Dizier. From that moment, she remained silent and calm, but full of dignity; not a complaint, not a reproach was allowed to pass her lips. She waited. Yet, though they left her at liberty to walk about (carefully depriving her of all means of communicating with any one beyond the walls), Adrienne's situation was harsh and painful, particularly for her, who so loved to be surrounded by pleasant and harmonious objects. She felt, however, that this situation could not last long. She did not thoroughly understand the wide scope and action of the laws; but her good sense taught her that a confinement of a few days under the plea of some appearances of insanity, more or less plausible in themselves, might be attempted, and even executed with impunity; but that it could not be prolonged beyond certain limits, because, after all, a young lady of her rank in society could not disappear suddenly from the world without inquiries being made on the subject; and the pretense of a sudden attack of madness would lead to a serious investigation. Whether true or false, this conviction had restored Adrienne to her accustomed elasticity and energy of character. And yet she sometimes in vain asked herself the cause of this attempt on her liberty. She knew too well the Princess de Saint-Dizier to believe her capable of acting in this way, without a certain end in view, and merely for the purpose of inflicting a momentary pang. In this, Mademoiselle de Car-

doville was not deceived. Father d'Aigrigny and the princess were both persuaded that Adrienne, better informed than she wished to acknowledge, knew how important it was to find herself in the house in the Rue Saint François on the 13th of February, and was determined to maintain her rights. In shutting up Adrienne as mad, it was intended to strike a fatal blow at her future prospects; but this last precaution was useless, for Adrienne, though upon the true scent of the family secret they had wished to conceal from her, had not yet entirely penetrated its meaning, for want of certain documents, which had been lost or hidden.

Whatever had been the motives for the odious conduct of Mademoiselle de Cardoville's enemies, she was not the less disgusted at it. No one could be more free from hatred or revenge than was this generous young girl, but when she thought of all the sufferings which the Princess de Saint-Dizier, Abbé d'Aigrigny, and Dr. Baleinier had occasioned her, she promised herself, not reprisals, but a striking reparation. If it was refused her, she was resolved to combat—without truce or rest—this combination of craft, hypocrisy, and cruelty, not from resentment for what she had endured, but to preserve from the same torments other innocent victims who might not, like her, be able to struggle and defend themselves.

Adrienne, still under the painful impression which had been caused by her interview with Rose Simon, was leaning against one of the sides of the rustic bench on which she was seated, and held her left hand over her eyes. She had laid down her bonnet beside her, and the inclined position of her head brought the long golden curls over her fair, shining cheeks. In this recumbent attitude, so full of careless grace, the charming proportions of her figure were seen to advantage beneath a watered green dress, while a broad collar, fastened with a rose-colored satin bow, and fine lace cuffs prevented too strong a contrast between the hue of her dress and the dazzling whiteness of the swan-like neck and Raphaellesque hands, imperceptibly veined with tiny azure lines. Over the high and well-formed instep were crossed the delicate strings of a little, black satin shoe; for Dr. Baleinier had allowed her to dress herself with her usual taste, and elegance of costume was not with Adrienne a mark of coquetry, but of duty toward herself, because God had made her so beautiful.

At sight of this young lady, whose dress and appearance she admired in all simplicity, without any envious or bitter comparison with her own poor clothes and deformity of person, Mother Bunch said immediately to herself, with the good sense and sagacity peculiar to her, that it was strange a mad woman should dress so sanely and gracefully. It was,

therefore, with a mixture of surprise and emotion that she approached the fence which separated her from Adrienne—reflecting, however, that the unfortunate girl might still be insane, and that this might turn out to be merely a lucid interval. And now, with a timid voice, but loud enough to be heard, Mother Bunch, in order to assure herself of Adrienne's identity, said, while her heart beat fast:

“Mademoiselle de Cardoville!”

“Who calls me?” said Adrienne.

On hastily raising her head and perceiving the hunchback, she could not suppress a slight cry of surprise, almost fright. For indeed this poor creature, pale, deformed, miserably clad, thus appearing suddenly before her, must have inspired Mademoiselle de Cardoville, so passionately fond of grace and beauty, with a feeling of repugnance, if not of terror; and these two sentiments were both visible in her expressive countenance.

The other did not perceive the impression she had made. Motionless, with her eyes fixed, and her hands clasped in a sort of adoring admiration, she gazed on the dazzling beauty of Adrienne, whom she had only half seen through the grated window. All that Agricola had told her of the charms of his protectress appeared to her a thousand times below the reality; and never, even in her secret poetic visions, had she dreamed of such rare perfection.

Thus, by a singular contrast, a feeling of mutual surprise came over these two girls—extreme types of deformity and beauty, wealth and wretchedness. After rendering, as it were, this involuntary homage to Adrienne, Mother Bunch advanced another step toward the fence.

“What do you want?” cried Mademoiselle de Cardoville, rising, with a sentiment of repugnance which could not escape the workgirl's notice.

The latter held down her head timidly, and said in a soft voice:

“I beg your pardon, mademoiselle, to appear so suddenly before you; but moments are precious. I come from Agricola.”

As she pronounced these words, the seamstress raised her eyes anxiously, fearing that Mademoiselle de Cardoville might have forgotten the name of the workman. But, to her great surprise and joy, the fears of Adrienne seemed to diminish at the name of Agricola, and approaching the fence, she looked at the speaker with benevolent curiosity.

“You come from M. Agricola Baudoin?” said she. “Who are you?”

“His adopted sister, madame—a poor needle-woman, who lives in the same house.”

Adrienne appeared to collect her thoughts, and said, smiling kindly, after a moment's silence:

"It was you, then, who persuaded M. Agricola to apply to me to procure him bail?"

"Oh, mademoiselle, do you remember ——"

"I never forget anything that is generous and noble. M. Agricola was much affected when he spoke of your devotion. I remember it well; it would be strange if I did not. But how came you here, in this convent?"

"They told me that I should perhaps be able to get some occupation here, as I am out of work. Unfortunately, I have been refused by the lady-superior."

"And how did you recognize me?"

"By your great beauty, mademoiselle, of which Agricola had told me."

"Or rather by this," said Adrienne, smiling, as she lifted, with the tips of her rosy fingers, one end of a long, silky ringlet of golden hair.

"You must pardon Agricola," said the sewing-girl, with one of those half smiles which rarely settled on her lips; "he is a poet, and omitted no single perfection in the respectful and admiring description which he gave of his protectress."

"And what induced you to come and speak to me?"

"The hope of being useful to you, mademoiselle. You received Agricola with so much goodness that I have ventured to go shares in his gratitude."

"You may well venture to do so, my dear girl," said Adrienne, with ineffable grace; "until now, unfortunately, I have only been able to serve your adopted brother by intention."

As they exchanged these words, Adrienne and Mother Bunch looked at each other with increasing surprise.

The latter was, first of all, astonished that a person who passed for mad should express herself as Adrienne did; next, she was amazed at the ease and freedom with which she herself answered the questions of Mademoiselle de Cardoville—not knowing that the latter was endowed with the precious privilege of lofty and benevolent natures, to draw out from those who approached her whatever sympathized with herself.

On her side, Mademoiselle de Cardoville was deeply moved and astonished to hear this young, low-born girl, dressed almost like a beggar, express herself in terms selected with so much propriety. The more she looked at her, the more the feeling of repugnance she at first experienced wore off, and was at length converted into quite the opposite sentiment. With that rapid and minute power of observation natural to women, she remarked, beneath the black crape of Mother Bunch's cap, the smoothness and brilliancy of the fair, chestnut hair. She remarked, too, the whiteness of the long, thin hand, though it displayed itself at the end

of a patched and tattered sleeve—an infallible proof that care and cleanliness and self-respect were at least struggling against symptoms of fearful distress. Adrienne discovered, also, in the pale and melan-



choly features, in the expression of the blue eyes, at once intelligent, mild, and timid, a soft and modest dignity, which made one forget the deformed figure. Adrienne loved physical beauty, and admired it passionately; but she had too superior a mind, too noble a soul, too

sensitive a heart, not to know how to appreciate moral beauty, even when it beamed from a humble and suffering countenance. Only, this kind of appreciation was new to Mademoiselle de Cardoville; until now her large fortune and elegant habits had kept her at a distance from persons of Mother Bunch's class.

After a short silence, during which the fair patrician and the poor workgirl had closely examined each other, Adrienne said to the other:

"It is easy, I think, to explain the cause of our mutual astonishment. You have, no doubt, discovered that I speak pretty reasonably for a mad woman—if they have told you I am one. And I," added Mademoiselle de Cardoville, in a tone of respectful commiseration, "find that the delicacy of your language and manners so singularly contrasts with the position in which you appear to be, that my surprise must be even greater than yours."

"Ah, mademoiselle!" cried Mother Bunch, with a welling forth of such deep and sincere joy that the tears started to her eyes; "is it true?—they have deceived me; you are not mad! Just now, when I beheld you so kind and beautiful, when I heard the sweet tone of your voice, I could not believe that such a misfortune had happened to you. But, alas! how is it then, mademoiselle, that you are in this place?"

"Poor child!" said Adrienne, touched by the affectionate interest of this excellent creature; "and how is it that you, with such a heart and head, should be in such distress? But be satisfied! I shall not always be here—and that will suffice to tell you that we shall both resume the place which becomes us. Believe me, I shall never forget how, in spite of the painful ideas which must needs occupy your mind, on seeing yourself deprived of work,—your only resource,—you have still thought of coming to me and of trying to serve me. You may, indeed, be eminently useful to me, and I am delighted at it, for then I shall owe you much—and you shall see how I will take advantage of my gratitude!" said Adrienne, with a sweet smile. "But," resumed she, "before talking of myself, let us think of others. Is your adopted brother still in prison?"

"By this time, mademoiselle, I hope he has obtained his freedom; thanks to the generosity of one of his comrades. His father went yesterday to offer bail for him, and they promised that he should be released to-day. But, from his prison, he wrote to me that he had something of importance to reveal to you."

"To me?"

"Yes, mademoiselle. Should Agricola be released immediately, by what means can he communicate with you?"

"He has secrets to tell me?" resumed Mademoiselle de Cardoville, with an air of thoughtful surprise. "I seek in vain to imagine what they can be; but so long as I am confined in this house, and secluded from every one, M. Agricola must not think of addressing himself directly or indirectly to me. He must wait till I am at liberty; but that is not all,—he must deliver from that convent two poor children, who are much more to be pitied than I am. The daughters of Marshal Simon are detained here against their will."

"You know their name?"

"When M. Agricola informed me of their arrival in Paris, he told me they were fifteen years old, and that they resembled each other exactly—so that, the day before yesterday, when I took my accustomed walk, and observed two poor little weeping faces come close to the windows of their separate cells, one on the ground-floor, the other on the first story, a secret presentiment told me that I saw in them the orphans of whom M. Agricola had spoken, and in whom I already took a lively interest, as being my relations."

"They are your relations, mademoiselle, then?"

"Yes, certainly. So, not being able to do more, I tried to express by signs how much I felt for them. Their tears and the sadness of their charming faces sufficiently told me that they were prisoners in the convent, as I am myself in this house."

"Oh! I understand,—the victim of the animosity of your family?"

"Whatever may be my fate, I am much less to be pitied than these two children whose despair is really alarming. Their separation is what chiefly oppresses them. By some words that one of them just now said to me I see that they are, like me, the victims of an odious machination. But, thanks to you, it will be possible to save them. Since I have been in this house I have had no communication with any one; they have not allowed me pen or paper, so it is impossible to write. Now listen to me attentively, and we shall be able to defeat an odious persecution."

"Oh, speak! speak, mademoiselle!"

"The soldier who brought these orphans to France, the father of M. Agricola, is still in town?"

"Yes, mademoiselle. Oh! if you only knew his fury, his despair, when, on his return home, he no longer found the children that a dying mother had confided to him!"

"He must take care not to act with the least violence. It would ruin all. Take this ring," said Adrienne, drawing it from her finger, "and give it to him. He must go instantly—are you sure that you can remember a name and address?"

"Oh! yes. Be satisfied on that point. Agricola only mentioned your name once, and I have not forgotten it. There is a memory of the heart."

"I perceive it, my dear girl. Remember, then, the name of the Count de Montbron."

"The Count de Montbron—I shall not forget."

"He is one of my good old friends, and lives on the Place Vendôme, No. 7."

"Place Vendôme, No. 7—I shall remember."

"M. Agricola's father must go to him this evening, and if he is not at home, wait for his coming in. He must ask to speak to him, as if from me, and send him this ring as a proof of what he says. Once with him, he must tell him all—the abduction of the girls, the name of the convent where they are confined, and my own detention as a lunatic in the asylum of Dr. Baleinier. Truth has an accent of its own, which M. de Montbron will recognize. He is a man of much experience and judgment, and possessed of great influence. He will immediately take the necessary steps, and to-morrow, or the day after, these poor orphans and myself will be restored to liberty—all thanks to you! But moments are precious; we might be discovered; make haste, dear child!"

At the moment of drawing back, Adrienne said to Mother Bunch, with so sweet a smile and affectionate a tone that it was impossible not to believe her sincere:

"M. Agricola told me that I had a heart like yours. I now understand how honorable, how flattering those words were for me. Pray give me your hand!" added Mademoiselle de Cardoville, whose eyes were filling with tears; and, passing her beautiful hand through an opening in the fence, she offered it to the other.

The words and the gesture of the fair patrician were full of so much real cordiality, that the seamstress, with no false shame, placed tremblingly her own poor thin hand in Adrienne's, while the latter, with a feeling of pious respect, lifted it spontaneously to her lips, and said:

"Since I cannot embrace you as my sister, let me at least kiss this hand, ennobled by labor."

Suddenly, footsteps were heard in the garden of Dr. Baleinier; Adrienne withdrew abruptly and disappeared behind some trees, saying:

"Courage, memory, and hope."

All this had passed so rapidly that the young work-woman had no time to speak or move; tears, sweet tears, flowed abundantly down her pale cheeks. For a young lady like Adrienne de Cardoville to treat her as a sister, to kiss her hand, to tell her that she was proud to resemble her in heart—her, a poor creature, vegetating in the lowest abyss of misery—

was to show a spirit of fraternal equality divine as the Gospel words. There are words and impressions which make a noble soul forget years of suffering, and which, as by a sudden flash, reveal to it something of its own worth and grandeur. Thus it was with the hunchback. Thanks to this generous speech, she was for a moment conscious of her own value. And though this feeling was rapid as it was ineffable, she clasped her hands and raised her eyes to heaven with an expression of fervent gratitude; for, if the poor seamstress did not practice, to use the jargon of ultramontane cant, no one was more richly endowed with that deep religious sentiment which is to mere dogmas what the immensity of the starry heaven is to the vaulted roof of a church.

Five minutes after quitting Mademoiselle de Cardoville, Mother Bunch, having left the garden without being perceived, re-ascended to the first story and knocked at the door of the linen-room. A sister came to open the door to her.

"Is not Mademoiselle Florine, with whom I came, still here, sister?" asked the needle-woman.

"She could not wait for you any longer. No doubt, you have come from our mother the superior?"

"Yes, yes, sister," answered the seamstress, casting down her eyes; "would you have the goodness to show me the way out?"

"Come with me."

The sewing-girl followed the nun, trembling at every step lest she should meet the superior, who would naturally have inquired the cause of her long stay in the convent.

At length the inner gate closed upon Mother Bunch. Passing rapidly across the vast court-yard and approaching the porter's lodge to ask him to let her out, she heard these words pronounced in a gruff voice:

"It seems, old Jerome, that we are to be doubly on our guard to-night. Well, I shall put two extra balls in my gun. The superior says we are to make two rounds instead of one."

"I want no gun, Nicholas," said the other voice; "I have my sharp scythe, a true gardener's weapon, and none the worse for that."

Feeling an involuntary uneasiness at these words, which she had heard by mere chance, Mother Bunch approached the porter's lodge, and asked him to open the outer gate.

"Where do you come from?" challenged the porter, leaning half-way out of his lodge, with a double-barreled gun, which he was occupied in loading, in his hand, and at the same time examining the seamstress with a suspicious air.

"I came from speaking to the superior," answered Mother Bunch timidly.

"Is that true?" said Nicholas roughly. "You look like a sanctified scare-crow. Never mind. Make haste, and get out."

The gate opened and Mother Bunch went out. Hardly had she gone a few steps in the street, when, to her great surprise, she saw the dog *Spoilsport* run up to her, and his master, Dagobert, a little way behind him, arriving also with precipitation. She was hastening to meet the soldier, when a full, sonorous voice exclaimed from a little distance: "Oh, my good sister!" which caused the girl to turn round.

From the opposite side to that whence Dagobert was coming, she saw Agricola hurrying toward the spot.

CHAPTER V

THE ENCOUNTERS



AT the sight of Dagobert and Agricola, Mother Bunch remained motionless with surprise a few steps from the convent gate.

The soldier had not yet perceived the seamstress. He advanced rapidly, following the dog, who, though lean, half-starved, rough-coated, and dirty, seemed to frisk with pleasure as he turned his intelligent face toward his master, to whom he had gone back after caressing Mother Bunch.

"Yes, yes; I understand you, old fellow!" said the soldier, with emotion, "you are more faithful than I was; you did not leave the dear children for a minute. Yes; you followed them and watched day and night, without food, at the door of the house to which they were taken—and, at length, weary of waiting to see them come forth, ran home to fetch me. Yes; while I was giving way to despair like a furious madman, you were doing what I ought to have done—discovering their retreat. What does it all prove? Why, that beasts are better than men,—which is well known. Well, at length I shall see them again. When I think that to-morrow is the 13th, and that without you, my old *Spoilsport*, all would be lost, it makes me shudder. But, I say, shall we soon be there? What a deserted quarter! and night coming on!"

Dagobert had held this discourse to *Spoilsport* as he walked along, following the good dog, who kept on at a rapid pace. Suddenly, seeing the faithful animal start aside with a bound, he raised his eyes, and perceived the dog frisking about the hunchback and Agricola, who had just met at a little distance from the convent gate.

"Mother Bunch!" exclaimed both father and son, as they approached the young work-woman, and looked at her with extreme surprise.

"There is good hope, M. Dagobert," said she, with inexpressible joy "Rose and Blanche are found!" Then, turning toward the smith, she added: "There is good hope, Agricola: Mademoiselle de Cardoville is not mad. I have just seen her."

"She is not mad? what happiness!" exclaimed the smith.

"The children!" cried Dagobert, trembling with emotion, as he took the workgirl's hands in his own. "You have seen them?"

"Yes; just now—very sad, very unhappy,—but I was not able to speak to them."

"Oh!" said Dagobert, stopping as if suffocated by the news, and pressing his hands on his bosom; "I never thought that my old heart could beat so! And yet,—thanks to my dog,—I almost expected what has taken place. Anyhow, I am quite dizzy with joy"

"Well, father, 'tis a good day," said Agricola, looking gratefully at the girl.

"Kiss me, my dear child!" added the soldier, as he pressed Mother Bunch affectionately in his arms; then, full of impatience, he added: "Come, let us go and fetch the children."

"Ah, my good sister!" said Agricola, deeply moved; "you will restore peace, perhaps life, to my father—and Mademoiselle de Cardoville; but how do you know?"

"A mere chance. And how did you come here?"

"*Spoilsport* stops and barks," cried Dagobert, who had already made several steps in advance.

Indeed the dog, who was as impatient as his master to see the orphans, and far better informed as to the place of their retreat, had posted himself at the convent gate, and was beginning to bark, to attract the attention of Dagobert. Understanding his dog, the latter said to the hunchback, as he pointed in that direction with his finger:

"The children are there?"

"Yes, M. Dagobert."

"I was sure of it. Good dog! Oh, yes! beasts are better than men—except you, my dear girl, who are better than either man or beast. But my poor children! I shall see them; I shall have them once more!"

So saying, Dagobert, in spite of his age, began to run very fast toward *Spoilsport*.

"Agricola," cried Mother Bunch, "prevent thy father from knocking at that door. He would ruin all."

In two strides the smith had reached his father, just as the latter was raising his hand to the knocker.

"Stop, father!" cried the smith, as he seized Dagobert by the arm.

"What the devil is it now?"

"Mother Bunch says that to knock would ruin all."

"How so?"

"She will explain it to you."

Although not so nimble as Agricola, Mother Bunch soon came up, and said to the soldier:



"M Dagobert, do not let us remain before this gate. They might open it and see us; and that would excite suspicion. Let us rather go away ——"

"Suspicion!" cried the veteran, much surprised, but without moving from the gate; "what suspicion?"

"I conjure you, do not remain there!" said Mother Bunch, with so much earnestness that Agricola joined her, and said to his father:

"Since sister wishes it, father, she has some reason for it. The Boulevard de l'Hôpital is a few steps from here; nobody passes that way; we can talk there without being interrupted."

"Devil take me if I understand a word of all this!" cried Dagobert, without moving from his post. "The children are here, and I will fetch them away with me. It is an affair of ten minutes."

"Do not think that, M. Dagobert," said Mother Bunch. "It is much more difficult than you imagine. But come!—come!—I can hear them talk in the court-yard."

In fact, the sound of voices was now distinctly audible.

"Come, father!" said Agricola, forcing away the soldier, almost in spite of himself.

Spoilsport, who appeared much astonished at these hesitations, barked two or three times without quitting his post, as if to protest against this humiliating retreat; but, being called by Dagobert, he hastened to rejoin the main body.

It was now about five o'clock in the evening. A high wind swept thick masses of grayish, rainy clouds rapidly across the sky. The Boulevard de l'Hôpital, which bordered on this portion of the convent garden was, as we before said, almost deserted. Dagobert, Agricola, and the sewing-girl could hold a private conference in this solitary place.

The soldier did not disguise the extreme impatience that these delays occasioned him. Hardly had they turned the corner of the street when he said to Mother Bunch:

"Come, my child, explain yourself. I am upon hot coals."

"The house in which the daughters of Marshal Simon are confined is a convent, M. Dagobert."

"A convent!" cried the soldier; "I might have suspected it."

Then he added: "Well, what then? I will fetch them from a convent as soon as from any other place. Once is not always."

"But, M. Dagobert, they are confined against their will and against yours. They will not give them up."

"They will not give them up? Zounds! we will see about that."

And he made a step toward the street.

"Father," said Agricola, holding him back, "one moment's patience; let us hear all."

"I will hear nothing. What! the children are there—two steps

from me — I know it — and I shall not have them, either by fair means or foul! Oh! that would indeed be curious. Let me go.”

“Listen to me, I beseech you, M. Dagobert,” said Mother Bunch, taking his hand; “there is another way to deliver these poor children, and that without violence; for violence, as Mademoiselle de Cardoville told me, would ruin all.”

“If there is any other way — quick — let me know it!”

“Here is a ring of Mademoiselle de Cardoville’s.”

“And who is this Mademoiselle de Cardoville?”

“Father,” said Agricola, “it is the generous young lady who offered to be my bail, and to whom I have very important matters to communicate.”

“Good, good,” replied Dagobert; “we will talk of that presently. Well, my dear girl — this ring.”

“You must take it directly, M. Dagobert, to the Count de Montbron, No. 7 Place Vendôme. He appears to be a person of influence, and is a friend of Mademoiselle de Cardoville’s. This ring will prove that you come on her behalf, and you will tell him that she is confined as a lunatic in the asylum next door to this convent in which the daughters of Marshal Simon are detained against their will.”

“Well, well — what next?”

“Then the Count de Montbron will take the proper steps with persons in authority to restore both Mademoiselle de Cardoville and the daughters of Marshal Simon to liberty; and perhaps to-morrow or the day after —”

“To-morrow or the day after!” cried Dagobert; “perhaps? — It is to-day, on the instant, that I *must* have them. The day after to-morrow would be of much use! Thanks, my good girl, but keep your ring; I will manage my own business. Wait for me here, my boy.”

“What are you going to do, father?” cried Agricola, still holding back the soldier. “It is a convent, remember.”

“You are only a raw recruit; I have my theory of convents at my fingers’ ends. In Spain I have put it in practice a hundred times. Here is what will happen. I knock; a portress opens the door to me; she asks me what I want, but I make no answer; she tries to stop me, but I pass on; once in the convent, I walk over it from top to bottom, calling my children with all my might.”

“But, M. Dagobert, the nuns?” said Mother Bunch, still trying to detain the soldier

“The nuns run after me, screaming like so many magpies. I know them. At Seville I fetched out an Andalusian girl, whom they were trying to keep by force. Well, I walk about the convent, calling for

Rose and Blanche. They hear me, and answer. If they are shut in, I take the first piece of furniture that comes to hand, and break open the door."

"But, M. Dagobert — the nuns — the nuns?"

"The nuns, with all their squalling, will not prevent my breaking open the door, seizing my children in my arms, and carrying them off. Should the outer door be shut, there will be a second smash — that's all. So," added Dagobert, disengaging himself from the grasp, "wait for me here. In ten minutes I shall be back again. Go and get a hackney-coach ready, my boy"

More calm than Dagobert, and, above all, better informed as to the provisions of the Penal Code, Agricola was alarmed at the consequences that might attend the veteran's strange mode of proceeding. So, throwing himself before him, he exclaimed:

"One word more, I entreat you."

"Zounds! make haste!"

"If you attempt to enter the convent by force, you will ruin all."

"How so?"

"First of all, M. Dagobert," said Mother Bunch, "there are men in the convent. As I came out just now, I saw the porter loading his gun, and heard the gardener talking of his sharp scythe, and the rounds he was to make at night."

"Much I care for a porter's gun and a gardener's scythe!"

"Well, father; but listen to me a moment, I conjure you. Suppose you knock, and the door is opened — the porter will ask you what you want."

"I tell him that I wish to speak to the superior, and so walk into the convent."

"But, M. Dagobert," said Mother Bunch, "when once you have crossed the court-yard, you reach a second door, with a wicket. A nun comes to it, to see who rings, and does not open the door till she knows the object of the visit."

"I will tell her that I wish to see the lady-superior."

"Then, father, as you are not known in the convent, they will go and inform the superior."

"Well, what then?"

"She will come down."

"What next?"

"She will ask you what you want, M. Dagobert."

"What I want? — the devil! my children!"

"One minute's patience, father. You cannot doubt, from the precautions they have taken, that they wish to detain these young ladies against their will, and against yours."

"Doubt! I am sure of it. To come to that point, they began by turning the head of my poor wife."

"Then, father, the superior will reply to you that she does not know what you mean, and that the young ladies are not in the convent."

"And I will reply to her that they are in the convent — witness Mother Bunch and *Spoilsport*."

"The superior will answer that she does not know you; that she has no explanations to give you; and will close the wicket."

"Then I break it open, since one must come to that in the end; so leave me alone, I tell you! 'sblood! leave me alone!"

"And, on this noise and violence, the porter will run and fetch the guard, and they will begin by arresting you."

"And what will become of your poor children then, M. Dagobert?" said Mother Bunch.

Agricola's father had too much good sense not to feel the truth of these observations of the girl and his son; but he knew also that, cost what it might, the orphans must be delivered before the morrow. The alternative was terrible — so terrible that, pressing his two hands to his burning forehead, Dagobert sunk back upon a stone bench, as if struck down by the inexorable fatality of the dilemma.

Agricola and the work-woman, deeply moved by this mute despair, exchanged a sad look. The smith, seating himself beside the soldier, said to him: "Do not be down-hearted, father. Remember what's been told you. By going with this ring of Mademoiselle de Cardoville's to the influential gentleman she named, the young ladies may be free by to-morrow, or, at worst, by the day after."

"Blood and thunder! you want to drive me mad!" exclaimed Dagobert, starting up from the bench and looking at Mother Bunch and his son with so savage an expression that Agricola and the seamstress drew back with an air of surprise and uneasiness.

"Pardon me, my children!" said Dagobert, recovering himself after a long silence. "I am wrong to get in a passion, for we do not understand one another. What you say is true; and yet I am right to speak as I do. Listen to me. You are an honest man, Agricola; you an honest girl; what I tell you is meant for you alone. I have brought these children from the depths of Siberia; do you know why? That they may be to-morrow morning in the Rue Saint François. If they are not there, I have failed to execute the last wish of their dying mother."

"No. 3 Rue Saint François?" cried Agricola, interrupting his father.

"Yes; how do you know the number?" said Dagobert.

"Is not the date inscribed on a bronze medal?"

"Yes," replied Dagobert, more and more surprised; "who told you?"

"One instant, father!" exclaimed Agricola; "let me reflect. I think I guess it. Did you not tell me, my good sister, that Mademoiselle de Cardoville was not mad?"

"Not mad. They detain her in this asylum to prevent her communicating with any one. She believes herself, like the daughters of Marshal Simon, the victim of an odious machination."

"No doubt of it," cried the smith. "I understand all now. Mademoiselle de Cardoville has the same interest as the orphans to appear to-morrow at the Rue Saint François. But she does not perhaps know it."

"How so?"

"One word more, my good girl. Did Mademoiselle de Cardoville tell you that she had a powerful motive to obtain her freedom by to-morrow?"

"No; for when she gave me this ring for the Count de Montbron, she said to me: 'By his means both I and Marshal Simon's daughters will be at liberty either to-morrow or the day after ——'"

"But explain yourself, then," said Dagobert to his son, with impatience.

"Just now," replied the smith, "when you came to seek me in prison, I told you, father, that I had a sacred duty to perform, and that I would rejoin you at home."

"Yes; and I went, on my side, to take some measures, of which I will speak to you presently."

"I ran instantly to the house in the Rue de Babylone, not knowing that Mademoiselle de Cardoville was mad or passed for mad. A servant, who opened the door to me, informed me that the young lady had been seized with a sudden attack of madness. You may conceive, father, what a blow that was to me! I asked where she was; they answered that they did not know. I asked if I could speak to any of the family; as my jacket did not inspire any great confidence, they replied that none of her family were at present there. I was in despair, but an idea occurred to me. I said to myself, 'If she is mad, her family physician must know where they have taken her; if she is in a state to hear me, he will take me to her; if not, I will speak to her doctor as I would to her relations. A doctor is often a friend.' I asked the servant, therefore, to give me the doctor's address. I obtained it without difficulty — Dr. Baleinier, No. 12 Rue Taranne. I ran thither, but he had gone out; they told me that I should find him about five o'clock at his asylum, which is next door to the convent. That is how we have met."

"But the medal—the medal?" said Dagobert impatiently; "where did you see it?"

"It is with regard to this and other things that I wished to make important communications to Mademoiselle de Cardoville."

"And what are these communications?"

"The fact is, father, I had gone to her the day of your departure, to beg her to get me bail. I was followed; and, when she learned this from her waiting-woman, she concealed me in a hiding-place. It was a sort of little vaulted room, in which no light was admitted, except through a tunnel, made like a chimney; yet, in a few minutes, I could see pretty clearly. Having nothing better to do, I looked all about me, and saw that the walls were covered with wainscoting. The entrance to this room was composed of a sliding panel, moving by means of weights and wheels admirably contrived. As these concern my trade, I was interested in them; so I examined the springs, spite of my emotion, with curiosity, and understood the nature of their play; but there was one brass knob of which I could not discover the use. It was in vain to pull and move it from right to left,—none of the springs were touched. I said to myself: 'This knob, no doubt, belongs to another piece of mechanism'—and the idea occurred to me, instead of drawing it toward me, to push it with force. Directly after, I heard a grating sound, and perceived, just above the entrance of the hiding-place, one of the panels, about two feet square, fly open like the door of a secretary. As I had, no doubt, pushed the spring rather too hard, a bronze medal and chain fell out with the shock."

"And you saw the address—Rue Saint François?" cried Dagobert.

"Yes, father; and, with this medal, a sealed letter fell to the ground. On picking it up, I saw that it was addressed, in large letters: '*For Mademoiselle de Cardoville. To be opened by her the moment it is delivered.*' Under these words, I saw the initials 'R.' and 'C.,' accompanied by a flourish, and this date: '*Paris, November the 12th, 1830.*' On the other side of the envelope I perceived two seals, with the letters 'R.' and 'C.,' surmounted by a coronet."

"And the seals were unbroken?" asked Mother Bunch.

"Perfectly whole."

"No doubt, then, Mademoiselle de Cardoville was ignorant of the existence of these papers," said the seamstress.

"That was my first idea, since she was recommended to open the letter immediately, and, notwithstanding this recommendation, which bore date two years back, the seals remained untouched."

"It is evident," said Dagobert. "What did you do?"

"I replaced the whole where it was before, promising myself to

inform Mademoiselle de Cardoville of it. But, a few minutes after, they entered my hiding-place, which had been discovered, and I did not see her again. I was only able to whisper a few words of doubtful meaning to one of her waiting-women, on the subject of what I had found, hoping thereby to arouse the attention of her mistress ; and, as soon as I was able to write to you, my good sister, I begged you to go and call upon Mademoiselle de Cardoville."

"But this medal," said Dagobert, "is exactly like that possessed by the daughters of Marshal Simon. How can you account for that ?"

"Nothing so plain, father. Mademoiselle de Cardoville is their relation. I remember now that she told me so."

"A relation of Rose and Blanche ?"

"Yes," added Mother Bunch ; "she told that also to me just now."

"Well, then," resumed Dagobert, looking anxiously at his son, "do you now understand why I must have my children this very day ? Do you now understand, as their poor mother told me on her death-bed, that one day's delay might ruin all ? Do you now see that I cannot be satisfied with a perhaps to-morrow, when I have come all the way from Siberia only that those children might be to-morrow in the Rue Saint François ? Do you at last perceive that I must have them this night, even if I have to set fire to the convent ?"

"But, father, if you employ violence —"

"Zounds ! do you know what the commissary of police answered me this morning, when I went to renew my charge against your mother's confessor ? He said to me that there was no proof, and that they could do nothing."

"But now there is proof, father, for at least we know where the young girls are. With that certainty we shall be strong. The law is more powerful than all the superiors of convents in the world."

"And the Count de Montbron, to whom Mademoiselle de Cardoville begs you to apply," said Mother Bunch, "is a man of influence. Tell him the reasons that make it so important for these young ladies, as well as Mademoiselle de Cardoville, to be at liberty this evening, and he will certainly hasten the course of justice, and to-night your children will be restored to you."

"Sister is in the right, father ; go to the count. Meanwhile, I will run to the commissary, and tell him that we now know where the young girls are confined. Do you go home and wait for us, my good girl. We will meet at our own house !"

Dagobert had remained plunged in thought ; suddenly, he said to Agricola :

"Be it so ; I will follow your counsel. But suppose the commissary

says to you, 'We cannot act before to-morrow'; suppose the Count de Montblon says to me the same thing; do not think I shall stand with my arms folded till the morning ——”



“But, father ——”

“It is enough,” resumed the soldier, in an abrupt voice; “I have made up my mind. Run to the commissary, my boy; wait for us at home,

my good girl; I will go to the count. Give me the ring. Now for the address!"

"The Count de Montbron, No. 7 Place Vendôme," said she; "you come on behalf of Mademoiselle de Cardoville."

"I have a good memory," answered the soldier. "We will meet as soon as possible in the Rue Brise-Miche."

"Yes, father; have good courage. You will see that the law protects and defends honest people."

"So much the better," said the soldier; "because, otherwise, honest people would be obliged to protect and defend themselves. Farewell, my children! we will meet soon in the Rue Brise-Miche."

.
When Dagobert, Agricola, and Mother Bunch separated, it was already dark night.

CHAPTER VI

THE MEETING

IT is eight o'clock in the evening, the rain dashes against the windows of Françoise Baudoin's apartment in the Rue Brise-Miche, while violent squalls of wind shake the badly closed doors and casements. The disorder and confusion of this humble abode, usually kept with so much care and neatness, bore testimony to the serious nature of the sad events which had thus disturbed existences hitherto peaceful in their obscurity.

The paved floor was soiled with mud, and a thick layer of dust covered the furniture, once so bright and clean. Since she had been taken away by the commissary the bed had not been made; at night Dagobert had thrown himself upon it for a few hours in his clothes, when, worn out with fatigue and crushed by despair, he had returned from new and vain attempts to discover Rose and Blanche's prison-house. Upon the drawers stood a bottle, a glass, and some fragments of dry bread, proving the frugality of the soldier, whose means of subsistence were reduced to the money lent by the pawnbroker upon the things pledged by Mother Bunch after the arrest of Françoise.

By the faint glimmer of a candle placed upon the little stove, now cold as marble,—for the stock of wood had long been exhausted,—one might have seen the hunchback sleeping upon a chair, her head resting on her bosom, her hands concealed beneath her cotton apron, and her feet resting on the lowest rung of the chair; from time to time she shivered in her damp, chill garments.

After that long day of fatigue and diverse emotions, the poor creature had eaten nothing. Had she even thought of it, she would have been at a loss for bread. Waiting for the return of Dagobert and Agriola, she had sunk into an agitated sleep—very different, alas! from calm and refreshing slumber. From time to time she half opened her eyes uneasily and looked around her. Then, again overcome by irresistible heaviness, her head fell upon her bosom.

After some minutes of silence, only interrupted by the noise of the wind, a slow and heavy step was heard on the landing-place.

The door opened and Dagobert entered, followed by *Spoilsport*.

Waking with a start, Mother Bunch raised her head hastily, sprang from her chair, and, advancing rapidly to meet Agricola's father, said to him :

"Well, M. Dagobert! have you good news? Have you ——"

She could not continue, she was so struck with the gloomy expression of the soldier's features. Absorbed in his reflections, he did not at first appear to perceive the speaker, but threw himself despondingly on a chair, rested his elbows upon the table, and hid his face in his hands. After a long meditation he rose and said in a low voice :

"It must—yes, it must be done!"

Taking a few steps up and down the room, Dagobert looked around him, as if in search of something. At length, after a minute's examination, he perceived near the stove a bar of iron, perhaps two feet long, serving to lift the covers when too hot for the fingers. Taking this in his hand, he looked at it closely, poised it to judge of its weight, and then laid it down upon the drawers with an air of satisfaction. Surprised at the long silence of Dagobert, the needle-woman followed his movements with timid and uneasy curiosity. But soon her surprise gave way to fright when she saw the soldier take down his knapsack, place it upon a chair, open it, and draw from it a pair of pocket-pistols, the locks of which he tried with the utmost caution.

Seized with terror, the seamstress could not forbear exclaiming :

"Good gracious, M. Dagobert! what are you going to do?"

The soldier looked at her as if he only now perceived her for the first time, and said to her in a cordial but abrupt voice :

"Good-evening, my good girl! What is the time?"

"Eight o'clock has just struck at Saint-Merri's, M. Dagobert."

"Eight o'clock," said the soldier, speaking to himself; "only eight!"

Placing the pistols by the side of the iron bar, he appeared again to reflect, while he cast his eyes round him.

"M. Dagobert," ventured the girl, "you have not then good news?"

"No."

That single word was uttered by the soldier in so sharp a tone that, not daring to question him further, Mother Bunch sat down in silence. *Spoilsport* came to lean his head on the knees of the girl, and followed the movements of Dagobert with as much curiosity as herself.

After remaining for some moments pensive and silent, the soldier approached the bed, took a sheet from it, appeared to measure its length, and then said, turning toward Mother Bunch :

"The scissors!"

"But, M. Dagobert ——"

"Come, my good girl! the scissors!" replied M. Dagobert, in a kind tone, but one that commanded obedience. The seamstress took the scissors from Françoise's work-basket, and presented them to the soldier.

"Now, hold the other end of the sheet, my girl, and draw it out tight."

In a few minutes Dagobert had cut the sheet into four strips, which he twisted in the fashion of cords, fastening them here and there with bits of tape, so as to preserve the twist, and tying them strongly together, so as to make a rope of about twenty feet long. This, however, did not suffice him, for he said to himself:

"Now I must have a hook."

Again he looked around him, and Mother Bunch, more and more frightened, for she now no longer doubted Dagobert's designs, said to him timidly:

"M. Dagobert, Agricola has not yet come in. It may be some good news that makes him so late."

"Yes," said the soldier bitterly, as he continued to cast round his eyes in search of something he wanted; "good news like mine! But I must have a strong iron hook."

Still looking about, he found one of the coarse gray sacks that Françoise was accustomed to make. He took it, opened it, and said to the workgirl:

"Put me the iron bar and the cord into this bag, my girl. It will be easier to carry."

"Heavens!" cried she, obeying his directions; "you will not go without seeing Agricola, M. Dagobert? He may perhaps have some good news to tell you."

"Be satisfied! I shall wait for my boy. I need not start before ten o'clock — so I have time."

"Alas, M. Dagobert! have you lost all hope?"

"On the contrary. I have good hope — but in myself."

So saying, Dagobert twisted the upper end of the sack, for the purpose of closing it, and placed it on the drawers, by the side of his pistols.

"At all events you will wait for Agricola, M. Dagobert?"

"Yes, if he arrive before ten o'clock."

"Alas! you have then quite made up your mind?"

"Quite. And yet, if I were weak enough to believe in bad omens ——"

"Sometimes, M. Dagobert, omens do not deceive one," said the girl, hoping to induce the soldier to abandon his dangerous resolution.

"Yes," resumed Dagobert; "old women say so—and, although I am not an old woman, what I saw just now weighed heavily on my heart. After all, I may have taken a feeling of anger for a presentiment."

"What have you seen?"

"I will tell it you, my good girl; it may help to pass the time, which appears long enough." Then, interrupting himself, he exclaimed: "Was it the half-hour that just struck?"

"Yes, M. Dagobert; it is half-past eight."

"Still an hour and a half," said Dagobert, in a hollow voice. "This," he added, "is what I saw. As I came along the street, my notice was attracted by a large red placard, at the head of which was a black panther devouring a white horse. That sight gave me a turn, for you must know, my good girl, that a black panther destroyed a poor old white horse that I had, *Spoilsport's* companion, whose name was *Jovial*."

At the sound of this name, once so familiar, *Spoilsport*, who was crouching at the work-woman's feet, raised his head hastily and looked at Dagobert.

"You see that beasts have memory; he recollects," said the soldier, sighing himself at the remembrance. Then, addressing his dog, he added: "Dost remember *Jovial*?"

On hearing this name a second time pronounced by his master, in a voice of emotion, *Spoilsport* gave a low whine, as if to indicate that he had not forgotten his old traveling-companion.

"It was indeed a melancholy incident, M. Dagobert," said Mother Bunch, "to find upon this placard, a panther devouring a horse."

"That is nothing to what's to come; you shall hear the rest. I drew near the bill, and read in it that one Morok, just arrived from Germany, is about to exhibit in a theater different wild beasts that he tamed; among others, a splendid lion, a tiger, and a black Java panther named *Death*."

"What an awful name!" said the hearer

"You will think it more awful, my child, when I tell you this is the very panther which strangled my horse at Leipsic, four months ago."

"Good Heaven! you are right, M. Dagobert," said the girl, "it is awful!"

"Wait a little," said Dagobert, whose countenance was growing more and more gloomy, "that is not all. It was by means of this very Morok, the owner of the panther, that I and my poor children were imprisoned in Leipsic."

"And this wicked man is in Paris and wishes you evil?" said Mother Bunch. "Oh! you are right, M. Dagobert; you must take care of yourself; it is a bad omen."

"For *him*, if I catch him," said Dagobert in a hollow tone. "We have old accounts to settle."

"M. Dagobert," cried Mother Bunch, listening, "some one is running up the stairs. It is Agricola's footstep; I am sure he has good news."

"That will just do," said the soldier hastily, without answering. "Agricola is a smith. He will be able to find me the iron hook."

A few minutes after, Agricola entered the room; but, alas! the seamstress perceived at the first glance in the dejected countenance of the workman the ruin of her cherished hopes.

"Well!" said Dagobert to his son, in a tone which clearly announced the little faith he attached to the steps taken by Agricola, "well, what news?"

"Father, it is enough to drive one mad—to make one dash one's brains out against the wall," cried the smith in a rage.

Dagobert turned toward Mother Bunch and said:

"You see, my poor child, I was sure of it."

"Well, father," cried Agricola, "have you seen the Count de Montbron?"

"The Count de Montbron set out for Lorraine three days ago. That is *my* good news," replied the soldier, with bitter irony; "let us have yours; I long to know all. I need to know if, on appealing to the laws, which, as you told me, protect and defend honest people, it ever happens that the rogues get the best of it. I want to know this, and *then* I want an iron hook, so I count upon you for both."

"What do you mean, father?"

"First, tell me what you have done. We have time. It is not much more than half-past eight. On leaving me, where did you go first?"

"To the commissary, who had already received your depositions."

"What did he say to you?"

"After having very kindly listened to all I had to state, he answered that these young girls were placed in a respectable house,—a convent,—so that there did not appear to be any urgent necessity for their immediate removal, and besides, he could not take upon himself to violate the sanctity of a religious dwelling upon your simple testimony; to-morrow he will make his report to the proper authorities, and steps will be taken accordingly."

"Yes, yes; plenty of put-offs," said the soldier.

"'But, sir,' answered I to him," resumed Agricola, "'it is now, this very night, that you ought to act, for if these young girls should not be present to-morrow morning in the Rue Saint François, their interests may suffer incalculable damage.' 'I am very sorry for it,' replied he, 'but I cannot, upon your simple declaration, or that of your father, who, like yourself, is no relation or connection of these young persons, act in

direct opposition to forms, which could not be set aside, even on the demand of a family. The law has its delays and its formalities, to which we are obliged to submit.'"

"Certainly!" said Dagobert; "we must submit to them at the risk of becoming cowardly, ungrateful traitors!"

"Did you speak also of Mademoiselle de Cardoville to him?" asked the workgirl.

"Yes; but he answered me on this subject in much the same manner: 'It was very serious; there was no proof in support of my deposition. A third party had told me that Mademoiselle de Cardoville affirms she was not mad; but all mad people pretend to be sane. He could not, therefore, upon my sole testimony, take upon himself to enter the house of a respectable physician. But he would report upon it, and the law would have its course ——'"

"When I wished to act just now for myself," said Dagobert, "did I not foresee all this? And yet I was weak enough to listen to you."

"But, father, what you wished to attempt was impossible, and you agreed that it would expose you to far too dangerous consequences."

"So," resumed the soldier, without answering his son, "they told you in plain terms that we must not think of obtaining legally the release of Rose and Blanche this evening, or even to-morrow morning?"

"Yes, father. In the eyes of the law there is no special urgency. The question may not be decided for two or three days."

"That is all I wished to know," said Dagobert, rising and walking up and down the room.

"And yet," resumed his son, "I did not consider myself beaten. In despair, but believing that justice could not remain deaf to such equitable claims, I ran to the *Palais de Justice*, hoping to find there a judge, a magistrate, who would receive my complaint and act upon it."

"Well?" said the soldier, stopping him.

"I was told that the courts shut every day at five o'clock, and do not open again till ten in the morning. Thinking of your despair and of the position of poor Mademoiselle de Cardoville, I determined to make one more attempt. I entered a guard-house of troops of the line, commanded by a lieutenant. I told him all. He saw that I was so much moved, and I spoke with such warmth and conviction, that he became interested. 'Lieutenant,' said I to him, 'grant me one favor—let a petty officer and two soldiers go to the convent to obtain a legal entrance. Let them ask to see the daughters of Marshal Simon, and learn whether it is their choice to remain, or return to my father, who brought them from Russia. You will then see if they are not detained against their will ——'"



FATHER LORIENT.

“And what answer did he give you, Agricola?” asked Mother Bunch, while Dagobert shrugged his shoulders and continued to walk up and down.

“‘My good fellow,’ said he, ‘what you ask me is impossible. I understand your motives, but I cannot take upon myself so serious a measure. I should be broke were I to enter a convent by force.’ ‘Then, sir, what am I to do? It is enough to turn one’s head!’ ‘Faith, I don’t know,’ said the lieutenant, ‘it will be safest, I think, to wait.’ Then, believing I had done all that was possible, father, I resolved to come back, in the hope that you might have been more fortunate than I; but, alas! I was deceived!”

So saying, the smith sank upon a chair, for he was worn out with anxiety and fatigue. There was a moment of profound silence after these words of Agricola, which destroyed the last hopes of the three, mute and crushed beneath the strokes of inexorable fatality

A new incident came to deepen the sad and painful character of this scene.

CHAPTER VII

DISCOVERIES

THE door, which Agricola had not thought of fastening, opened, as it were, timidly, and Françoise Baudoin, Dagobert's wife, pale, sinking, hardly able to support herself, appeared on the threshold.

The soldier, Agricola, and Mother Bunch were plunged in such deep dejection that neither of them at first perceived the entrance. Françoise advanced two steps into the room, fell upon her knees, clasped her hands together, and said in a weak and humble voice :

“My poor husband—pardon !”

At these words, Agricola and the workgirl, whose backs were toward the door, turned round suddenly, and Dagobert hastily raised his head.

“My mother!” cried Agricola, running to Françoise.

“My wife!” cried Dagobert, as he also rose and advanced to meet the unfortunate woman.

“On your knees, dear mother!” said Agricola, stooping down to embrace her affectionately “Get up, I entreat you.”

“No, my child,” said Françoise, in her mild, firm accents, “I will not rise till your father has forgiven me. I have wronged him much—now I know it.”

“Forgive you, my poor wife?” said the soldier, as he drew near with emotion. “Have I ever accused you, except in my first transport of despair? No, no; it was the bad priests that I accused, and there I was right. Well! I have you again,” added he, assisting his son to raise her; “one grief the less. They have then restored you to liberty! Yesterday I could not even learn in what prison they had put you. I have so many cares that I could not think of you only. But come, dear wife, sit down !”

“How feeble you are, dear mother!—how cold—how pale!” said Agricola, with anguish, his eyes filling with tears.

"Why did you not let us know?" added he. "We would have gone to fetch you. But how you tremble! Your hands are frozen!" continued the smith, as he knelt down before Françoise. Then turning toward Mother Bunch: "Pray, make a little fire directly"

"I thought of it as soon as your father came in, Agricola, but there is no wood nor charcoal left."

"Then pray borrow some of Father Lorient, my dear sister. He is too good a fellow to refuse. My poor mother trembles so—she might fall ill."

Hardly had he said the words than Mother Bunch went out.

The smith rose from the ground, took the blanket from the bed, and carefully wrapped it about the knees and feet of his mother. Then, again kneeling down, he said to her: "Your hands, dear mother!" And, taking those feeble palms in his own, he tried to warm them with his breath.

Nothing could be more touching than this picture: the robust young man, with his energetic and resolute countenance, expressing by his looks the greatest tenderness, and paying the most delicate attentions to his poor, pale, trembling old mother.

Dagobert, kind-hearted as his son, went to fetch a pillow, and brought it to his wife, saying:

"Lean forward a little, and I will put this pillow behind you; you will be more comfortable and warmer"

"How you both spoil me!" said Françoise, trying to smile. "And you to be so kind, after all the ill I have done!" added she to Dagobert, as, disengaging one of her hands from those of her son, she took the soldier's hand and pressed it to her tearful eyes. "In prison," said she in a low voice, "I had time to repent."

Agricola's heart was near breaking at the thought that his pious and good mother, with her angelic purity, should for a moment have been confined in prison with so many miserable creatures. He would have made some attempt to console her on the subject of the painful past, but he feared to give a new shock to Dagobert, and was silent.

"Where is Gabriel, dear mother?" inquired he. "How is he? As you have seen him, tell us all about him."

"I have seen Gabriel," said Françoise, drying her tears; "he is confined at home. His superiors have rigorously forbidden his going out. Luckily, they did not prevent his receiving me, for his words and counsels have opened my eyes to many things. It is from him that I learned how guilty I had been to you, my poor husband."

"How so?" asked Dagobert.

"Why, you know that if I caused you so much grief, it was not from wickedness. When I saw you in such despair, I suffered almost as

much myself; but I durst not tell you so, for fear of breaking my oath. I had resolved to keep it, believing that I did well, believing that it was my duty. And yet something told me that it could not be my duty to cause you so much pain. 'Alas, my God! enlighten me!' I exclaimed in my prison, as I knelt down and prayed, in spite of the mockeries of the other women. 'Why should a just and pious work, commanded by my confessor, the most respectable of men, overwhelm me and mine with so much misery? Have mercy on me, my God, and teach me if I have done wrong without knowing it!' As I prayed with fervor, God heard me, and inspired me with the idea of applying to Gabriel. 'I thank thee, Father! I will obey!' said I within myself. 'Gabriel is like my own child; but he is also a priest, a martyr — almost a saint. If any one in the world imitates the charity of our blessed Saviour, it is surely he. When I leave this prison, I will go and consult him, and he will clear up my doubts.'

"You are right, dear mother," cried Agricola; "it was a thought from heaven. Gabriel is an angel of purity, courage, nobleness — the type of the true and good priest!"

"Ah, poor wife!" said Dagobert, with bitterness; "if you had never had any confessor but Gabriel!"

"I thought of it before he went on his journey," said Françoise, with simplicity. "I should have liked to confess to the dear boy — but I fancied Abbé Dubois would be offended, and that Gabriel would be too indulgent with regard to my sins."

"Your sins, poor dear mother?" said Agricola. "As if you ever committed any!"

"And what did Gabriel tell you?" asked the soldier.

"Alas, my dear! had I had but such an interview with him sooner! What I told him of Abbé Dubois roused his suspicions, and he questioned me, dear child, as to many things of which he had never spoken to me before. Then I opened to him my whole heart, and he did the same to me, and we both made sad discoveries with regard to persons whom we had always thought very respectable, and who yet had deceived each of us, unknown to the other."

"How so?"

"Why, they used to tell him, under the seal of secrecy, things that were supposed to come from me; and they used to tell me, under the same seal of secrecy, things that were supposed to come from him. Thus, he confessed to me, that he did not feel at first any vocation for the priesthood; but they told him that I should not believe myself safe in this world or in the next, if he did not take orders, because I felt persuaded that I could best serve the Lord by giving Him so good a

servant; and that yet I had never dared to ask Gabriel himself to give me this proof of his attachment, though I had taken him from the street, a deserted orphan, and brought him up as my own son, at the cost of labor and privations. Then, how could it be otherwise? The poor dear child, thinking he could please me, sacrificed himself. He entered the seminary."

"Horrible," said Agricola; "'tis an infamous snare, and, for the priests who were guilty of it, a sacrilegious lie!"

"During all that time," resumed Françoise, "they were holding very different language to me. I was told that Gabriel felt his vocation, but that he durst not allow it to me, for fear of my being jealous on account of Agricola, who, being brought up as a workman, would not enjoy the same advantages as those which the priesthood would secure to Gabriel. So when he asked my permission to enter the seminary—dear child! he entered it with regret, but he thought he was making me so happy!—instead of discouraging this idea, I did all in my power to persuade him to follow it, assuring him that he could not do better, and that it would occasion me great joy. You understand, I exaggerated, for fear he should think me jealous on account of Agricola."

"What an odious machination!" said Agricola, in amazement. "They were speculating in this unworthy manner upon your mutual devotion. Thus Gabriel saw the expression of your dearest wish in the almost forced encouragement given to his resolution."

"Little by little, however, as Gabriel has the best heart in the world, the vocation really came to him. That was natural enough: he was born to console those who suffer, and devote himself for the unfortunate. He would never have spoken to me of the past, had it not been for this morning's interview. But then I beheld him, who is usually so mild and gentle, become indignant, exasperated, against M. Rodin and another person whom he accuses. He had serious complaints against them already, but these discoveries, he says, will make up the measure."

At these words of Françoise, Dagobert pressed his hand to his forehead, as if to recall something to his memory. For some minutes he had listened with surprise, and almost terror, to the account of these secret plots, conducted with such deep and crafty dissimulation.

Françoise continued:

"When at last I acknowledged to Gabriel, that, by the advice of Abbé Dubois, my confessor, I had delivered to a stranger the children confided to my husband,—General Simon's daughters,—the dear boy blamed me, though with great regret, not for having wished to instruct the poor orphans in the truths of our holy religion, but for having acted without the consent of my husband, who alone was answerable before

God and man for the charge intrusted to him. Gabriel severely censured Abbé Dubois' conduct, who had given me, he said, bad and perfidious counsels; and then, with the sweetness of an angel, the dear boy consoled me, and exhorted me to come and tell you all. My poor husband! he would fain have accompanied me, for I had scarcely courage to come hither, so strongly did I feel the wrong I had done you; but, unfortunately, Gabriel is confined at the seminary by strict order of his superiors; he could not come with me, and ——"

Here Dagobert, who seemed much agitated, abruptly interrupted his wife.

"One word, Françoise," said he; "for, in truth, in the midst of so many cares and black, diabolical plots, one loses one's memory, and the head begins to wander. Did you not tell me, the day the children disappeared, that Gabriel, when taken in by you, had round his neck a bronze medal, and in his pocket a book filled with papers in a foreign language?"

"Yes, my dear"

"And this medal and these papers were afterward delivered to your confessor?"

"Yes, my dear."

"And Gabriel never spoke of them since?"

"Never."

Agricola, hearing this from his mother, looked at her with surprise, and exclaimed:

"Then Gabriel has the same interest as the daughters of General Simon or Mademoiselle de Cardoville to be in the Rue Saint François to-morrow?"

"Certainly," said Dagobert. "And now do you remember what he said to us, just after my arrival—that, in a few days, he would need our support in a serious matter?"

"Yes, father."

"And he is kept a prisoner at his seminary! And he tells your mother that he has to complain of his superiors! and he asked us for our support with so sad and grave an air that I said to him ——"

"He would speak so, if about to engage in a deadly duel," interrupted Agricola. "True, father! and yet you, who are a good judge of valor, acknowledged that Gabriel's courage was equal to yours. For him so to fear his superiors, the danger must be great indeed."

"Now that I have heard your mother, I understand it all," said Dagobert. "Gabriel is like Rose and Blanche, like Mademoiselle de Cardoville, like your mother, like all of us, perhaps—the victim of a secret conspiracy of wicked priests. Now that I know their dark machinations,

their infernal perseverance, I see," added the soldier, in a whisper, "that it requires strength to struggle against them. I had not the least idea of their power."



"You are right, father ; for those who are hypocritical and wicked do as much harm as those who are good and charitable, like Gabriel, do good. There is no more implacable enemy than a bad priest."

"I know it, and that's what frightens me; for my poor children are in their hands. But is all lost? Shall I bring myself to give them up without an effort? Oh, no, no! I will not show any weakness—and yet, since your mother told us of these diabolical plots, I do not know how it is—but I seem less strong, less resolute. What is passing around me appears so terrible. The spiriting away of these children is no longer an isolated fact—it is one of the ramifications of a vast conspiracy, which surrounds and threatens us all. It seems to me as if I and those I love walked together in darkness, in the midst of serpents, in the midst of snares that we can neither see nor struggle against. Well! I'll speak out! I have never feared death—I am not a coward—and yet I confess—yes, I confess it—these black robes frighten me ——"

Dagobert pronounced these words in so sincere a tone that his son started, for he shared the same impression.

And it was quite natural. Frank, energetic, resolute characters, accustomed to act and fight in the light of day, never feel but one fear—and that is, to be ensnared and struck in the dark by enemies that escape their grasp. Thus, Dagobert had encountered death twenty times; and yet, on hearing his wife's simple revelation of this dark tissue of lies and treachery and crime, the soldier felt a vague sense of fear; and, though nothing was changed in the conditions of his nocturnal enterprise against the convent, it now appeared to him in a darker and more dangerous light.

The silence which had reigned for some moments was interrupted by Mother Bunch's return. The latter, knowing that the interview between Dagobert, his wife, and Agricola ought not to have any important witness, knocked lightly at the door, and remained in the passage with Father Lorient.

"Can we come in, Madame Françoise?" asked the seamstress. "Here is Father Lorient bringing some wood."

"Yes, yes; come in, my good girl," said Agricola, while his father wiped the cold sweat from his forehead.

The door opened and the worthy dyer appeared with his hands and arms of an amaranthine color; on one side he carried a basket of wood, and on the other some live coal in a shovel.

"Good-evening to the company!" said Daddy Lorient. "Thank you for having thought of me, Madame Françoise. You know that my shop and everything in it are at your service. Neighbors should help one another; that's my motto! You were kind enough, I should think, to my late wife!"

Then, placing the wood in a corner and giving the shovel to Agricola, the worthy dyer, guessing from the sorrowful appearance of the

different actors in this scene that it would be impolite to prolong his visit, added :

“ You don’t want anything else, Madame Françoise ? ”

“ No, thank you, Father Lorient.”

“ Then, good-evening to the company ! ” said the dyer ; and, addressing Mother Bunch, he added : “ Don’t forget the letter for M. Dagobert. I durstn’t touch it for fear of leaving the marks of my four fingers and thumb in amaranthine ! But, good-evening to the company ! ” and Father Lorient went out.

“ M. Dagobert, here is a letter,” said Mother Bunch.

She set herself to light the fire in the stove, while Agricola drew his mother’s arm-chair to the hearth.

“ See what it is, my boy,” said Dagobert to his son ; “ my head is so heavy that I cannot see clear.” Agricola took the letter, which contained only a few lines, and read it before he looked at the signature :

“ ‘ AT SEA, December 25th, 1831.

“ ‘ I avail myself of a few minutes’ communication with a ship bound direct for Europe, to write to you, my old comrade, a few hasty lines, which will reach you probably by way of Havre, before the arrival of my last letter from India. You must by this time be at Paris, with my wife and child — tell them —

“ ‘ I am unable to say more — the boat is departing. Only one word : I shall soon be in France. Do not forget the 13th February ; the future of my wife and child depends upon it.

“ ‘ Adieu, my friend ! Believe in my eternal gratitude.

“ ‘ SIMON.’ ”

“ Agricola—quick ! look to your father ! ” cried the hunchback.

From the first words of this letter, which present circumstances made so cruelly applicable, Dagobert had become deadly pale. Emotion, fatigue, exhaustion, joined to this last blow made him stagger.

His son hastened to him, and supported him in his arms. But soon the momentary weakness passed away, and Dagobert, drawing his hand across his brow, raised his tall figure to its full height. Then, while his eye sparkled, his rough countenance took an expression of determined resolution, and he exclaimed, in wild excitement : “ No, no ! I will not be a traitor ; I will not be a coward. The black robes shall not frighten me ; and this night Rose and Blanche Simon shall be free ! ”

CHAPTER VIII

THE PENAL CODE

STARTLED for a moment by the dark and secret machinations of the *black robes*, as he called them, against the persons he most loved, Dagobert might have hesitated an instant to attempt the deliverance of Rose and Blanche; but his indecision ceased directly on the reading of Marshal Simon's letter, which came so timely to remind him of his sacred duties.

To the soldier's passing dejection had succeeded a resolution full of calm and collected energy

"Agricola, what o'clock is it?" asked he of his son.

"Just struck nine, father."

"You must make me directly an iron hook—strong enough to support my weight, and wide enough to hold on the coping of a wall. This stove will be forge and anvil; you will find a hammer in the house; and, as for iron," said the soldier, hesitating and looking around him, "as for iron—here is some!"

So saying, the soldier took from the hearth a strong pair of tongs and presented them to his son, adding: "Come, my boy! blow up the fire, blow it to a white heat, and forge me this iron!"

On these words, Françoise and Agricola looked at each other with surprise; the smith remained mute and confounded, not knowing the resolution of his father, and the preparations he had already commenced with the needle-woman's aid.

"Don't you hear me, Agricola," repeated Dagobert, still holding the pair of tongs in his hand; "you must make me a hook directly."

"A hook, father?—for what purpose?"

"To tie to the end of a cord that I have here. There must be a loop at one end large enough to fix it securely."

"But this cord—this hook—for what purpose are they?"

"To scale the walls of the convent, if I cannot get in by the door."

"What convent?" asked Françoise of her son.

"How, father?" cried the latter, rising abruptly. "You still think of that?"

"Why! what else should I think of?"

"But, father, it is impossible; you will never attempt such an enterprise."

"What is it, my child?" asked Françoise, with anxiety. "Where is father going?"

"He is going to break into the convent where Marshal Simon's daughters are confined and carry them off."

"Great God! my poor husband—a sacrilege!" cried Françoise, faithful to her pious traditions; and clasping her hands together, she endeavored to rise and approach Dagobert.

The soldier, foreseeing that he would have to contend with observations and prayers of all sorts, and resolved not to yield, determined to cut short all useless supplications, which would only make him lose precious time. He said, therefore, with a grave, severe, and almost solemn air, which showed the inflexibility of his determination:

"Listen to me, wife—and you also, my son. When, at my age, a man makes up his mind to anything, he knows the reason why. And when a man has once made up his mind, neither wife nor child can alter it. I have resolved to do my duty; so spare yourselves useless words. It may be your duty to talk to me as you have done; but it is over now, and we will say no more about it. This evening I must be master in my own house."

Timid and alarmed, Françoise did not dare to utter a word, but she turned a supplicating glance toward her son.

"Father," said the latter, "one word more—only one."

"Let us hear," replied Dagobert impatiently

"I will not combat your resolution; but I will prove to you that you do not know to what you expose yourself."

"I know it all," replied the soldier, in an abrupt tone. "The undertaking is a serious one; but it shall not be said that I neglected any means to accomplish what I promised to do."

"But, father, you do not know to what danger you expose yourself," said the smith, much alarmed.

"Talk of danger! talk of the porter's gun and the gardener's scythe!" said Dagobert, shrugging his shoulders contemptuously. "Talk of them, and have done with it; for, after all, suppose I were to leave my carcass in the convent, would not you remain to your mother? For twenty years you were accustomed to do without me. It will be all the less trying to you."

"And I, alas! am the cause of these misfortunes!" cried the poor mother "Ah! Gabriel had good reason to blame me."

"Madame Françoise, be comforted," whispered the seamstress, who had drawn near to Dagobert's wife. "Agricola will not suffer his father to expose himself thus."

After a moment's hesitation, the smith resumed, in an agitated voice:

"I know you too well, father, to think of stopping you by the fear of death."

"Of what danger, then, do you speak?"

"Of a danger from which even you will shrink, brave as you are," said the young man, in a voice of emotion, that forcibly struck his father.

"Agricola," said the soldier, roughly and severely, "that remark is cowardly; you are insulting."

"Father ——"

"Cowardly!" resumed the soldier angrily; "because it is cowardice to wish to frighten a man from his duty — insulting! because you think me capable of being so frightened."

"Oh, M. Dagobert!" exclaimed the sewing-girl, "you do not understand Agricola."

"I understand him too well," answered the soldier harshly

Painfully affected by the severity of his father, but firm in his resolution, which sprang from love and respect, Agricola resumed, while his heart beat violently:

"Forgive me, if I disobey you, father; but, were you to hate me for it, I must tell you to what you expose yourself by scaling at night the walls of a convent ——"

"My son! do you dare?" cried Dagobert, his countenance inflamed with rage.

"Agricola!" exclaimed Françoise, in tears. "My husband!"

"M. Dagobert, listen to Agricola!" exclaimed Mother Bunch. "It is only in your interest that he speaks."

"Not one word more!" replied the soldier, stamping his foot with anger.

"I tell you, father," exclaimed the smith, growing fearfully pale as he spoke, "that you risk being sent to the galleys!"

"Unhappy boy!" cried Dagobert, seizing his son by the arm; "could you not keep that from me — rather than expose me to become a traitor and a coward?"

And the soldier shuddered, as he repeated: "The galleys!" — and, bending down his head, remained mute, pensive, withered, as it were, by those blasting words.

"Yes, to enter an inhabited place by night, in such a manner, is what the law calls burglary, and punishes with the galleys," cried Agricola, at once grieved and rejoicing at his father's depression of mind — "yes, father, the galleys, if you are taken in the act; and there are ten chances to one that you would be so. Mother Bunch has told you the convent is guarded. This morning, had you attempted to carry off the two young ladies in broad daylight, you would have been arrested; but, at least, the attempt would have been an open one, with a character of honest audacity about it that hereafter might have procured your acquittal. But to enter by night, and by scaling the walls — I tell you the galleys would be the consequence. Now, father, decide. Whatever you do I will do also; for you shall not go alone. Say but the word, and I will forge the hook for you; I have here hammer and pincers, and in an hour we will set out."

A profound silence followed these words—a silence that was only interrupted by the stifled sobs of Françoise, who muttered to herself in despair:

"Alas! this is the consequence of listening to Abbé Dubois!"

It was in vain that Mother Bunch tried to console her; she was herself alarmed, for the soldier was capable of braving even infamy, and Agricola had determined to share the perils of his father.

In spite of his energetic and resolute character, Dagobert remained for some time in a kind of stupor. According to his military habits, he had looked at this nocturnal enterprise only as a *ruse de guerre*, authorized by his good cause and by the inexorable fatality of his position; but the words of his son brought him back to the fearful reality, and left him the choice of a terrible alternative—either to betray the confidence of Marshal Simon, and set at naught the last wishes of the mother of the orphans, or else to expose himself, and above all his son, to lasting disgrace, without even the certainty of delivering the orphans after all.

Drying her eyes, bathed in tears, Françoise exclaimed, as if by a sudden inspiration:

"Dear me! I have just thought of it. There is perhaps a way of getting these dear children from the convent without violence."

"How so, mother?" said Agricola hastily.

"It is Abbé Dubois who had them conveyed thither; but Gabriel supposes that he probably acted by the advice of M. Rodin."

"And if that were so, mother, it would be in vain to apply to M. Rodin. We should get nothing from him."

"Not from him—but perhaps from that powerful abbé, who is Gabriel's superior, and has always patronized him since his first entrance at the seminary."

"What abbé, mother?"

"Abbé d'Aigrigny"

"True, mother; before being a priest he was a soldier. He may be more accessible than others; and yet ——"

"D'Aigrigny!" cried Dagobert, with an expression of hate and horror. "There is then mixed up with these treasons a man who was a soldier before being a priest, and whose name is D'Aigrigny!"

"Yes, father; the Marquis d'Aigrigny—before the Restoration, in the service of Russia—but, in 1815, the Bourbons gave him a regiment."

"It is he!" said Dagobert, in a hollow voice. "Always the same! like an evil spirit—to the mother, father, children."

"What do you mean, father?"

"The Marquis d'Aigrigny!" replied Dagobert. "Do you know what is this man? Before he was a priest he was the murderer of Rose and Blanche's mother, because she despised his love. Before he was a priest he fought against his country, and twice met General Simon face to face in war. Yes; while the general was prisoner at Leipsic, covered with wounds at Waterloo, the turncoat marquis triumphed with the Russians and English! Under the Bourbons, this same renegade, loaded with honors, found himself once more face to face with the persecuted soldier of the empire. Between them, this time, there was a mortal duel—the marquis was wounded; General Simon was proscribed, condemned, driven into exile. The renegade, you say, has become a priest. Well! I am now certain that it is he who has carried off Rose and Blanche, in order to wreak on them his hatred of their father and mother. It is the infamous D'Aigrigny who holds them in his power. It is no longer the fortune of these children that I have to defend; it is their life—do you hear what I say?—their very life!"

"What, father! do you think this man capable ——"

"A traitor to his country who finishes by becoming a mock priest is capable of anything. I tell you that perhaps at this moment he may be killing those children by a slow fire!" exclaimed the soldier, in a voice of agony. "To separate them from each other was to begin to kill them. Yes!" added Dagobert, with an exasperation impossible to describe; "the daughters of Marshal Simon are in the power of the Marquis d'Aigrigny and his band, and I hesitate to attempt their rescue for fear of the galleys! The galleys!" added he, with a convulsive burst of laughter; "what do I care for the galleys? Can they send a corpse there? If this last attempt fail, shall I not have the right to blow my brains out? Put the iron in the fire, my boy,—quick! time presses,—and strike while the iron's hot!"

"But your son goes with you!" exclaimed Françoise, with a cry of

maternal despair. Then rising, she threw herself at the feet of Dagobert, and said: "If you are arrested, he will be arrested also."

"To escape the galleys he will do as I do. I have two pistols."



"And without you — without him," cried the unhappy mother, extending her hands in supplication, "what will become of me?"

"You are right — I was too selfish," said Dagobert. "I will go alone."

"You shall not go alone, father," replied Agricola.

"But your mother?"

"Mother Bunch sees what is passing: she will go to M. Hardy, my master, and tell him all. He is the most generous of men, and my mother will have food and shelter for the rest of her days."

"And *I* am the cause of all!" cried Françoise, wringing her hands in despair. "Punish me, oh, Heaven! for it is my fault. I gave up those children. I shall be punished by the death of my child!"

"Agricola, you shall not go with me; I forbid it!" said Dagobert, clasping his son closely to his breast.

"What! when I have pointed out the danger, am I to be the first to shrink from it? you cannot think thus lowly of me, father! Have I not also some one to deliver? The good, the generous Mademoiselle de Cardoville, who tried to save me from a prison, is a captive in her turn! I will follow you, father. It is my right, my duty, my determination."

So saying, Agricola put into the heated stove the tongs that were intended to form the hook. "Alas! may Heaven have pity upon us!" cried his poor mother, sobbing as she still knelt, while the soldier seemed a prey to the most violent internal struggle.

"Do not cry so, dear mother; you will break my heart," said Agricola, as he raised her with the seamstress's help. "Be comforted! I have exaggerated the danger of my father. By acting prudently we two may succeed in our enterprise without much risk—eh, father?" added he, with a significant glance at Dagobert. "Once more, be comforted, dear mother. I will answer for everything. We will deliver Marshal Simon's daughters and Mademoiselle de Cardoville, too. Sister, give me the hammer and pincers, there in the press."

The seamstress, drying her tears, did as desired, while Agricola, by the help of bellows, revived the fire in which the tongs were heating.

"Here are your tools, Agricola," said the hunchback, in a deeply agitated voice, as she presented them with trembling hands to the smith, who, with the aid of the pincers, soon drew from the fire the white-hot tongs, and with vigorous blows of the hammer formed them into a hook, taking the stove for his anvil.

Dagobert had remained silent and pensive. Suddenly he said to Françoise, taking her by the hand:

"You know what metal your son is. To prevent his following me would now be impossible. But do not be afraid, dear wife; we shall succeed—at least, I hope so. And if we should not succeed—if Agricola and I should be arrested—well, we are not cowards; we shall not commit suicide; but father and son will go arm in arm to prison, with heads high and proud look, like two brave men who have done their

duty. The day of trial must come, and we will explain all, honestly, openly; we will say that, driven to the last extremity, finding no support, no protection in the law, we were forced to have recourse to violence. So hammer away, my boy," added Dagobert, addressing his son pounding the hot iron; "forge, forge without fear. Honest judges will absolve honest men."

"Yes, father, you are right. Be at ease, dear mother! The judges will see the difference between rascals who scale walls in order to rob, and an old soldier and his son who, at peril of their liberty, their life, their honor, have sought only to deliver unhappy victims."

"And if this language should not be heard," resumed Dagobert, "so much the worse for them! It will not be your son or husband who will be dishonored in the eyes of honest people. If they send us to the galleys and we have courage to survive, the young and the old convict will wear their chains proudly, and the renegade marquis, the traitor priest, will bear more shame than we. So forge without fear, my boy! there are things which the galleys themselves cannot disgrace—our good conscience and our honor! But now," he added, "two words with my good Mother Bunch. It grows late and time presses. On entering the garden did you remark if the windows of the convent were far from the ground?"

"No, not very far, M. Dagobert; particularly on that side which is opposite to the madhouse where Mademoiselle de Cardoville is confined."

"How did you manage to speak to that young lady?"

"She was on the other side of an open paling which separates the two gardens."

"Excellent!" said Agricola, as he continued to hammer the iron; "we can easily pass from one garden to the other. The madhouse may perhaps be the readier way out. Unfortunately, you do not know Mademoiselle de Cardoville's chamber."

"Yes, I do," returned the workgirl, recollecting herself. "She is lodged in one of the wings, and there is a shade over her window, painted like canvas, with blue and white stripes."

"Good! I shall not forget that."

"And can you form no guess as to where are the rooms of my poor children?" said Dagobert.

After a moment's reflection, Mother Bunch answered:

"They are opposite to the chamber occupied by Mademoiselle de Cardoville, for she makes signs to them from her window; and I now remember she told me that their two rooms are on different stories, one on the ground-floor and the other up one pair of stairs."

"Are these windows grated?" asked the smith.

"I do not know."

"Never mind, my good girl; with these indications we shall do very well," said Dagobert. "For the rest, I have my plans."

"Some water, my little sister," said Agricola, "that I may cool my iron." Then, addressing his father: "Will this hook do?"

"Yes, my boy; as soon as it is cold we will fasten the cord."

For some time Françoise Baudoin had remained upon her knees, praying with fervor. She implored Heaven to have pity on Agricola and Dagobert, who in their ignorance were about to commit a great crime; and she entreated that the celestial vengeance might fall upon her only, as she alone had been the cause of the fatal resolution of her son and husband.

Dagobert and Agricola finished their preparations in silence. They were both very pale and solemnly grave. They felt all the danger of so desperate an enterprise.

The clock at Saint-Merry's struck ten. The sound of the bell was faint, and almost drowned by the lashing of the wind and rain, which had not ceased for a moment.

"Ten o'clock!" said Dagobert, with a start. "There is not a minute to lose. Take the sack, Agricola."

"Yes, father."

As he went to fetch the sack, Agricola approached Mother Bunch, who was hardly able to sustain herself, and said to her in a rapid whisper:

"If we are not here to-morrow, take care of my mother. Go to M. Hardy, who will perhaps have returned from his journey. Courage, my sister! embrace me. I leave poor mother to you."

The smith, deeply affected, pressed the almost fainting girl in his arms.

"Come, old *Spoilsport*," said Dagobert; "you shall be our scout." Approaching his wife, who, just risen from the ground, was clasping her son's head to her bosom and covering it with tears and kisses, he said to her, with a semblance of calmness and serenity: "Come, my dear wife, be reasonable! Make us a good fire. In two or three hours we will bring home the two poor children and a fine young lady. Kiss me! that will bring me luck."

Françoise threw herself on her husband's neck, without uttering a word. This mute despair, mingled with convulsive sobs, was heart-rending. Dagobert was obliged to tear himself from his wife's arms, and striving to conceal his emotion, he said to his son, in an agitated voice:

"Let us go; she unmans me. Take care of her, my good Mother Bunch. Agricola, come!"

The soldier slipped the pistols into the pocket of his great-coat and rushed toward the door, followed by *Spoilsport*.

"My son, let me embrace you once more; alas! it is perhaps for the last time!" cried the unfortunate mother, incapable of rising, but stretching out her arms to Agricola. "Forgive me! it is all my fault."

The smith turned back, mingled his tears with those of his mother,—for he also wept,—and murmured in a stifled voice:

"Adieu, dear mother! Be comforted; we shall soon meet again."

Then, escaping from the embrace, he joined his father upon the stairs.

Françoise Baudoin heaved a long sigh, and fell almost lifeless into the needle-woman's arms.

Dagobert and Agricola left the Rue Brise-Miche in the height of the storm and hastened with great strides toward the Boulevard de l'Hôpital, followed by the dog.

CHAPTER IX

BURGLARY

HALF-PAST eleven had just struck when Dagobert and his son arrived on the Boulevard de l'Hôpital.

The wind blew violently, and the rain fell down in torrents, but notwithstanding the thickness of the watery clouds, it was tolerably light, thanks to the late rising of the moon. The tall, dark trees and the white walls of the convent garden were distinguishable in the midst of the pale glimmer. Afar off, a street-lamp, acted on by the wind, with its red light hardly visible through the mist and rain, swung backward and forward over the dirty causeway of the solitary boulevard.

At rare intervals they heard, at a very great distance, the rattle and rumble of a coach returning home late ; then all was dark silence.

Since their departure from the Rue Brise-Miche, Dagobert and his son had hardly exchanged a word. The design of these two brave men was noble and generous, and yet, resolute but pensive, they glided through the darkness like bandits at the hour of nocturnal crimes. Agricola carried on his shoulders the sack containing the cord, the hook, and the iron bar ; Dagobert leaned upon the arm of his son, and *Spoilsport* followed his master.

"The bench where we sat down must be close by," said Dagobert, stopping.

"Yes," said Agricola, looking round ; "here it is, father."

"It is only half-past eleven ; we must wait for midnight," resumed Dagobert. "Let us be seated for an instant, to rest ourselves and decide upon our plan."

After a moment's silence the soldier took his son's hands between his own, and thus continued :

"Agricola, my child ; it is yet time. Let me go alone, I entreat you. I shall know very well how to get through the business ; but the nearer

the moment comes, the more I fear to drag you into this dangerous enterprise."

"And the nearer the moment comes, father, the more I feel I may be of some use; but, be it good or bad, I will share the fortune of your adventure. Our object is praiseworthy; it is a debt of honor that you have to pay, and I will take one-half of it. Do not fancy that I will now draw back. And so, dear father, let us think of our plan of action."

"Then you *will* come?" said Dagobert, stifling a sigh.

"We must do everything," proceeded Agricola, "to secure success. You have already noticed the little garden-door, near the angle of the wall; that is excellent."

"We shall get by that way into the garden, and look immediately for the open paling."

"Yes; for on one side of this paling is the wing inhabited by Mademoiselle de Cardoville, and on the other that part of the convent in which the general's daughters are confined."

At this moment *Spoilsport*, who was crouching at Dagobert's feet, rose suddenly, and pricked up his ears, as if to listen.

"One would think that *Spoilsport* heard something," said Agricola. "Let us listen."

They listened, but heard only the wind sounding through the tall trees of the boulevard.

"Now I think of it, father—when the garden-door is once open, shall we take *Spoilsport* with us?"

"Yes; for if there is a watch-dog, he will settle him. And then he will give us notice of the approach of those who go the rounds. Besides, he is so intelligent, so attached to Rose and Blanche that (who knows?) he may help to discover the place where they are. Twenty times I have seen him find them in the woods, by the most extraordinary instinct."

A slow and solemn knell here rose above the noise of the wind; it was the first stroke of twelve.

That note seemed to echo mournfully through the souls of Agricola and his father. Mute with emotion, they shuddered, and by a spontaneous movement each grasped the hand of the other. In spite of themselves, their hearts kept time to every stroke of the clock, as each successive vibration was prolonged through the gloomy silence of the night.

At the last stroke, Dagobert said to his son in a firm voice:

"It is midnight. Shake hands, and let us forward!"

The father and son embraced. The moment was decisive and solemn.

"Now, father," said Agricola, "we will act with as much craft and daring as thieves going to pillage a strong-box."

So saying, the smith took from the sack the cord and hook; Dagobert armed himself with the iron bar, and both advanced cautiously, following the wall in the direction of the little door, situated not far from the angle formed by the street and the boulevard. They stopped from time to time to listen attentively, trying to distinguish those noises which were not caused either by the high wind or the rain.

It continued light enough for them to be able to see surrounding objects, and the smith and the soldier soon gained the little door, which appeared much decayed and not very strong.

"Good!" said Agricola to his father. "It will yield at one blow."

The smith was about to apply his shoulder vigorously to the door when *Spoilsport* growled hoarsely and made a "point."

Dagobert silenced the dog with a word, and, grasping his son's arm, said to him in a whisper: "Do not stir; the dog has scented some one in the garden."

Agricola and his father remained for some minutes motionless, holding their breath and listening. The dog, in obedience to his master, no longer growled, but his uneasiness and agitation were displayed more and more. Yet they heard nothing.

"The dog must have been deceived, father," whispered Agricola.

"I am sure of the contrary. Do not move."

After some seconds of expectation, *Spoilsport* crouched down abruptly and pushed his nose as far as possible under the door, snuffing up the air.

"They are coming," said Dagobert hastily to his son.

"Let us draw off a little distance," replied Agricola.

"No," said his father; "we must listen. It will be time to retire if they open the door. Here, *Spoilsport*! down!"

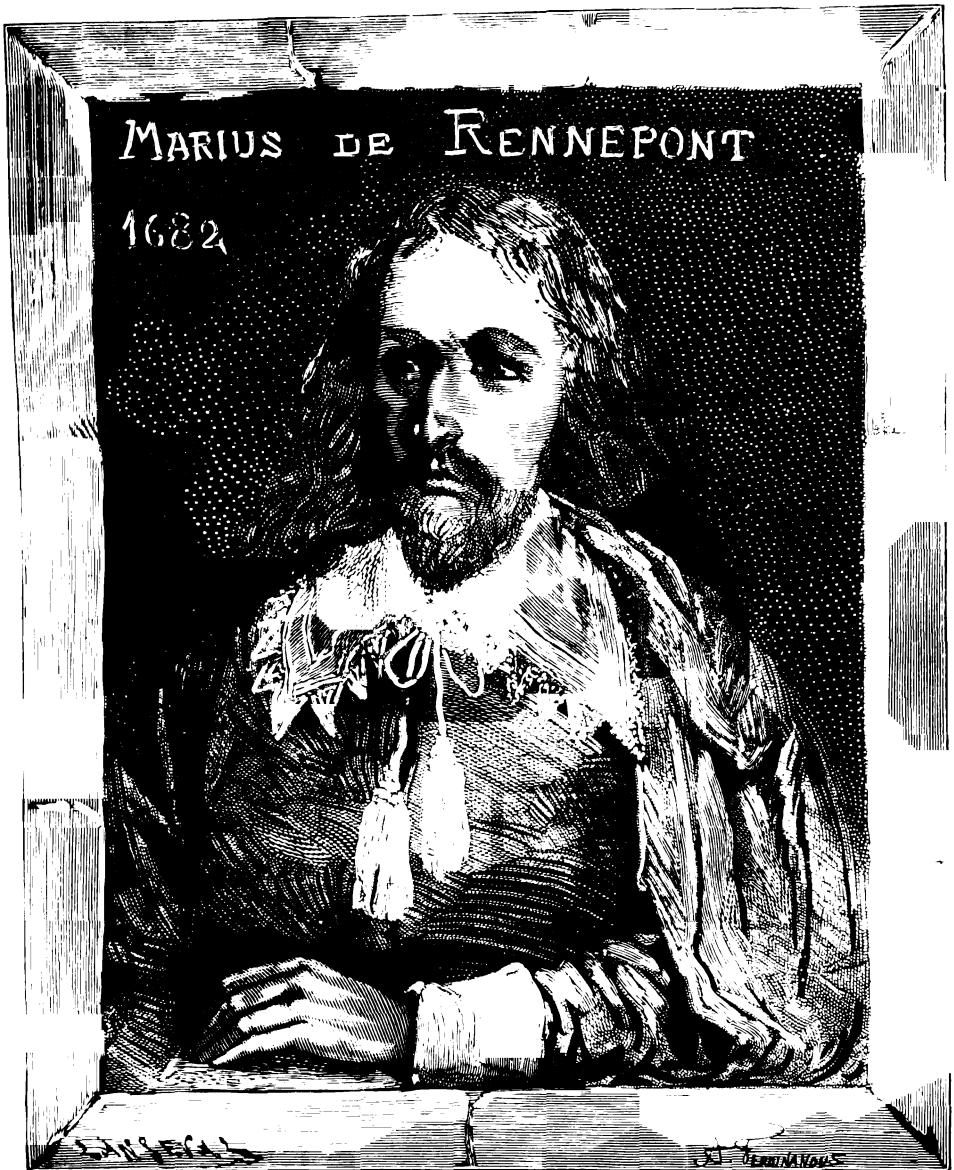
The dog obeyed, and, withdrawing from the door, crouched down at the feet of his master. Some seconds after they heard a sort of splashing on the damp ground, caused by heavy footsteps in puddles of water, and then the sound of words which, carried away by the wind, did not reach distinctly the ears of the soldier and the smith.

"They are the people of whom Mother Bunch told us, going their round," said Agricola to his father.

"So much the better. There will be an interval before they come round again, and we shall have some two hours before us without interruption. Our affair is all right now."

By degrees the sound of the footsteps became less and less distinct, and at last died away altogether.

"Now, quick! we must not lose any time," said Dagobert to his son, after waiting about ten minutes; "they are far enough. Let us try to open the door."



Agricola leaned his powerful shoulder against it and pushed vigorously; but the door did not give way, notwithstanding its age.

"Confound it!" said Agricola; "there is a bar on the inside. I am sure of it, or these old planks would not have resisted my weight."

"What is to done?"

"I will scale the wall by means of the cord and hook, and open the door from the other side."

So saying, Agricola took the cord, and after several attempts, succeeded in fixing the hook on the coping of the wall.

"Now, father, give me a leg up; I will help myself up with the cord; once astride on the wall, I can easily turn the hook and get down into the garden."

The soldier leaned against the wall and joined his two hands, in the hollow of which his son placed one of his feet; then mounting upon the robust shoulders of his father, he was able, by help of the cord and some irregularities in the wall, to reach the top. Unfortunately the smith had not perceived that the coping of the wall was strewn with broken bottles, so that he wounded his knees and hands; but, for fear of alarming Dagobert, he repressed every exclamation of pain, and replacing the hook he glided down the cord to the ground. The door was close by, and he hastened to it; a strong wooden bar had indeed secured it on the inside. This was removed, and the lock was in so bad a state that it offered no resistance to a violent effort from Agricola. The door was opened and Dagobert entered the garden with *Spoilsport*.

"Now," said the soldier to his son, "thanks to you, the worst is over. Here is a means of escape for the poor children, and Mademoiselle de Cardoville. The thing is now to find them without accident or delay. *Spoilsport* will go before as a scout. Come, my good dog!" added Dagobert, "above all, fair and softly!"

Immediately the intelligent animal advanced a few steps, sniffing and listening with the care and caution of a hound searching for the game.

By the half light of the clouded moon Dagobert and his son perceived round them a quincunx of tall trees, at which several paths met. Uncertain which to choose, Agricola said to his father:

"Let us take the path that runs alongside the wall. It will surely lead to some building."

"Right! Let us walk on the strips of grass, instead of through the mud. It will make less noise."

The father and son, preceded by *Spoilsport*, kept for some time in a winding path at no great distance from the wall. They stopped now and then to listen, or to satisfy themselves before continuing their advance, with regard to the changing aspects of the trees and bushes, which, shaken by the wind and faintly illumined by the pale light of the moon, often took strange and doubtful forms.

Half-past twelve struck as Agricola and his father reached a large

iron gate which shut in that part of the garden reserved for the superior—the same into which Mother Bunch had intruded herself after seeing Rose Simon converse with Adrienne de Cardoville.

Through the bars of this railing Agricola and his father perceived at a little distance an open paling, which joined a half-finished chapel, and beyond it a little square building.

“That is no doubt the building occupied by Mademoiselle de Cardoville,” said Agricola.

“And the building which contains the chambers of Rose and Blanche, but which we cannot see from here, is no doubt opposite it,” said Dagobert. “Poor children! they are there, weeping tears of despair,” added he, with profound emotion.

“Provided the railing be but open,” said Agricola.

“It will probably be so, being within the walls.”

“Let us go on gently.”

In a few steps Dagobert and his son reached the railing of which the gate was only fastened by the catch of the lock.

Dagobert was about to open it, when Agricola said to him: “Take care! do not make it creak on its hinges.”

“Shall I push it slowly or suddenly?”

“Let me manage it,” said Agricola.

He opened the gate so quickly that it creaked very little; still the noise might have been plainly heard, in the silence of the night, during one of the lulls between the squalls of wind.

Agricola and his father remained motionless for a moment, listening uneasily, before they ventured to pass through the gate. Nothing stirred, however; all remained calm and still. With fresh courage, they entered the reserved garden.

Hardly had the dog arrived on this spot, when he exhibited tokens of extraordinary delight. Pricking up his ears, wagging his tail, bounding rather than running, he had soon reached the paling where, in the morning, Rose Simon had for a moment conversed with Mademoiselle de Cardoville. He stopped an instant at this place, as if at fault, and turned round and round like a dog seeking the scent.

Dagobert and his son, leaving *Spoilsport* to his instinct, followed his least movements with intense interest, hoping everything from his intelligence and his attachment to the orphans.

“It was no doubt near this paling that Rose stood when Mother Bunch saw her,” said Dagobert. “*Spoilsport* is on her track. Let him alone.”

After a few seconds, the dog turned his head toward Dagobert, and started at full trot in the direction of a door on the ground-floor of a

building opposite to that occupied by Adrienne. Arrived at this door, the dog lay down, seemingly waiting for Dagobert.

"No doubt of it! the children are there!" said Dagobert, hastening to rejoin *Spoilsport*; "it was by this door that they took Rose into the house."

"We must see if the windows are grated," said Agricola, following his father.

"Well, old fellow!" whispered the soldier, as he came up to the dog and pointed to the building; "are Rose and Blanche there?"

The dog lifted his head and answered by a joyful whimper, followed by two or three slight barks.

Dagobert had just time to seize the mouth of the animal with his hands.

"He will ruin all!" exclaimed the smith. "They have perhaps heard him."

"No," said Dagobert. "But there is no longer any doubt—the children are here."

At this instant the iron gate by which the soldier and his son had entered the reserved garden, and which they had left open, fell to with a loud noise.

"They've shut us in," said Agricola hastily; "and there is no other issue."

For a moment the father and son looked in dismay at each other; but Agricola instantly resumed:

"The gate has perhaps shut of itself. I will make haste to assure myself of this, and to open it again if possible."

"Go quickly; I will examine the windows."

Agricola flew toward the gate, while Dagobert, gliding along the wall, soon reached the windows on the ground-floor. They were four in number, and two of them were not grated. He looked up at the first story; it was not very far from the ground, and none of the windows had bars. It would then be easy for that one of the two sisters who inhabited this story, once informed of their presence, to let herself down by means of a sheet, as the orphans had already done to escape from the inn of the White Falcon. But the difficult thing was to know which room she occupied. Dagobert thought they might learn this from the sister on the ground-floor; but then there was another difficulty—at which of the four windows should they knock?

Agricola returned precipitately.

"It was the wind, no doubt, which shut the gate," said he. "I have opened it again and made it fast with a stone. But we have no time to lose."

"And how shall we know the windows of the poor children?" said Dagobert anxiously.

"That is true," said Agricola, with uneasiness. "What is to be done?"

"To call them at hap-hazard," continued Dagobert, "would be to give the alarm."

"Oh, Heavens!" cried Agricola, with increasing anguish. "To have arrived here, under their windows, and yet not to know!"

"Time presses," said Dagobert hastily, interrupting his son; "we must run all risks."

"But how, father?"

"I will call out aloud, 'Rose and Blanche'—in their state of despair, I am sure they do not sleep. They will be stirring at my first summons. By means of a sheet fastened to a window, she who is on the first story will in five minutes be in our arms. As for the one on the ground-floor—if her window is not grated, we can have her in a second. If it is, we shall soon loosen one of the bars."

"But, father—this calling out aloud?"

"Will not perhaps be heard."

"But if it is heard—all will be lost."

"Who knows? Before they have time to call the watch and open several doors, the children may be delivered. Once at the entrance of the boulevard, and we shall be safe."

"It is a dangerous course; but I see no other."

"If there are only two men, I and *Spoilsport* will keep them in check, while you will have time to carry off the children."

"Father, there is a better way—a surer one," cried Agricola suddenly "From what Mother Bunch told us, Mademoiselle de Cardoville has corresponded by signs with Rose and Blanche."

"Yes."

"Hence she knows where they are lodged, as the poor children answered her from their windows."

"You are right; there is only that course to take. But how find her room?"

"Mother Bunch told me there was a shade over the window."

"Quick! we have only to break through a wooden fence. Have you the iron bar?"

"Here it is."

"Then, quick!"

In a few steps Dagobert and his son had reached the paling. Three planks, torn away by Agricola, opened an easy passage.

"Remain here, father, and keep watch," said he to Dagobert, as he entered Dr. Baleinier's garden.

The indicated window was easily recognized. It was high and broad; a sort of shade surmounted it, for this window had once been a door, since walled in to the third of its height. It was protected by bars of iron, pretty far apart.

Since some minutes, the rain had ceased. The moon, breaking through the clouds, shone full upon the building. Agricola, approaching the window, saw that the room was perfectly dark; but light came from a room beyond, through a door left half open. The smith, hoping that Mademoiselle de Cardoville might be still awake, tapped lightly at the window. Soon after, the door in the background opened entirely, and Mademoiselle de Cardoville, who had not yet gone to bed, came from the other chamber, dressed as she had been at her interview with Mother Bunch. Her charming features were visible by the light of the taper she held in her hand. Their present expression was that of surprise and anxiety. The young girl set down the candlestick on the table, and appeared to listen attentively as she approached the window. Suddenly she started, and stopped abruptly. She had just discerned the face of a man, looking at her through the window.

Agricola, fearing that Mademoiselle de Cardoville would retire in terror to the next room, again tapped on the glass, and running the risk of being heard by others, said in a pretty loud voice: "It is Agricola Baudoin!"

These words reached the ears of Adrienne. Instantly remembering her interview with Mother Bunch, she thought that Agricola and Dago-bert must have entered the convent for the purpose of carrying off Rose and Blanche. She ran to the window, recognized Agricola in the clear moonlight, and cautiously opened the casement.

"Mademoiselle," said the smith hastily, "there is not an instant to lose. The Count de Montbron is not in Paris. My father and myself have come to deliver you."

"Thanks, thanks, M. Agricola!" said Mademoiselle de Cardoville, in a tone expressive of the most touching gratitude; "but think first of the daughters of General Simon."

"We do think of them, mademoiselle; I have come to ask you which are their windows."

"One is on the ground-floor, the last on the garden side; the other is exactly over it on the first story"

"Then they are saved!" cried the smith.

"But let me see," resumed Adrienne hastily; "the first story is pretty high. You will find near the chapel they are building some long poles belonging to the scaffolding. They may be of use to you."

"They will be as good as a ladder to reach the upstairs window. But now to think of you, mademoiselle."

"Think only of the dear orphans. Time presses. Provided they are delivered to-night, it makes little difference to me to remain a day or two longer in this house."

"No, mademoiselle," cried the smith, "it is of the first importance that you should leave this place to-night. Interests are concerned of which you know nothing. I am now sure of it."

"What do you mean?"

"I have not time to explain myself further; but I conjure you, mademoiselle, to come. I can wrench out two of these bars: I will fetch a piece of iron ——"

"It is not necessary. They are satisfied with locking the outer door of this building, which I inhabit alone. You can easily break open the lock."

"And in ten minutes we shall be on the boulevard," said the smith. "Make yourself ready, mademoiselle; take a shawl, a bonnet, for the night is cold. I will return instantly."

"M. Agricola," said Adrienne, with tears in her eyes, "I know what you risk for my sake. I shall prove to you, I hope, that I have as good a memory as you have. You and your adopted sister are noble and valiant creatures, and I am proud to be indebted to you. But do not return for me till the daughters of Marshal Simon are in safety"

"Thanks to your directions, the thing will be done directly, mademoiselle. I fly to rejoin my father, and we will come together to fetch you."

Following the excellent advice of Mademoiselle de Cardoville, Agricola took one of the long, strong poles that rested against the wall of the chapel, and bearing it on his robust shoulder, hastened to rejoin his father. Hardly had Agricola passed the fence to direct his steps toward the chapel, obscured in shadow, than Mademoiselle de Cardoville thought she perceived a human form issue from one of the clumps of trees in the convent garden, cross the path hastily, and disappear behind a high hedge of box. Alarmed at the sight, Adrienne in vain called to Agricola in a low voice, to bid him beware. He could not hear her; he had already rejoined his father, who, devoured by impatience, went from window to window with ever-increasing anguish.

"We are saved," whispered Agricola. "Those are the windows of the poor children — one on the ground-floor, the other on the first story."

"At last!" said Dagobert, with a burst of joy impossible to describe. He ran to examine the windows. "They are not grated!" he exclaimed.

"Let us make sure that one of them is there," said Agricola; "then, by placing this pole against the wall, I will climb up to the first story, which is not so very high."

"Right, my boy!—once there, tap at the window and call Rose or Blanche. When she answers, come down. We will rest the pole against the window and the poor child will slide along it. They are bold and active. Quick, quick! to work!"

While Agricola placed his pole against the wall and prepared to mount, Dagobert tapped at the panes of the last window on the ground-floor, and said aloud:

"It is I—Dagobert!"

Rose Simon indeed occupied the chamber. The unhappy child, in despair at being separated from her sister, was a prey to a burning fever, and, unable to sleep, watered her pillow with her tears. At the sound of the tapping on the glass, she started up affrighted; then, hearing the voice of the soldier,—that voice so familiar and so dear,—she sat up in bed, pressed her hands across her forehead, to assure herself that she was not the plaything of a dream, and, wrapped in her long night-dress, ran to the window with a cry of joy.

But suddenly—and before she could open the casement—two reports of fire-arms were heard, accompanied by loud cries of "Help! thieves!"

The orphan stood petrified with terror, her eyes mechanically fixed upon the window, through which she saw confusedly, by the light of the moon, several men engaged in a mortal struggle, while the furious barking of *Spoilsport* was heard above all the incessant cries of "Help! help! Thieves! Murder!"

CHAPTER X

THE EVE OF A GREAT DAY



ABOUT two hours before the event last related took place at St. Mary's Convent, Rodin and Abbé d'Aigrigny met in the room where we have already seen them, in the Rue du Milieu des Ursins. Since the Revolution of July, Father d'Aigrigny had thought proper to remove for the moment to this temporary habitation all the secret archives and correspondence of his Order — a prudent measure, since he had every reason to fear that the reverend fathers would be expelled by the state from that magnificent establishment, with which the Restoration had so liberally endowed their society.*

* This was an idle fear, for we read in the *Constitutionnel*, February 1st, 1832, as follows: "When, in 1822, M. de Corbiere abruptly abolished that splendid Normal School, which, during its few years' existence, had called forth or developed such a variety of talent, it was decided, as some compensation, that a house in the Rue des Postes should be purchased, where the congregation of the Holy Ghost should be located and endowed. The Minister of Marine supplied the funds for this purpose, and its management was placed at the disposal of the society, which then reigned over France. From that period it has held quiet possession of the place, which at once became a sort of house of entertainment, where Jesuitism sheltered and provided for the numerous novitiates that flocked from all parts of the country, to receive instructions from Father Ronsin. Matters were in this state when the Revolution of July broke out, which threatened to deprive the society of this establishment. But — it will hardly be believed — this was not done. It is true that they suppressed their practice, but they left them in possession of the house in the Rue des Postes; and to this very day, the 31st of January, 1832, the members of the Sacred Heart are housed at the expense of government, during the whole of which time the Normal School has been without a shelter — and, on its reorganization, thrust into a dirty hole, in a narrow corner of the College of Louis the Great."

The above appeared in the *Constitutionnel* respecting the house in the Rue des Postes. We are certainly ignorant as to the nature of the transactions since that period, that have taken place between the reverend fathers and the government, but we read further,

Rodin, dressed in his usual sordid style, mean and dirty as ever, was writing modestly at his desk, faithful to his humble part of secretary, which concealed, as we have already seen, a far more important office — that of *Socius* — a function which, according to the constitutions of the

in a recently published article that appeared in a journal, in reference to the Society of Jesus, that the house in the Rue des Postes still forms a part of their landed property. We will here give some portions of the article in question.

“The following is a list of the property belonging to this branch of Jesuits:

	Francs.
House in the Rue des Postes, worth about	500,000
One in the Rue de Sèvres, estimated at.	300,000
Farm, two leagues from Paris	150,000
House and church at Bourges.	100,000
Nôtre Dame de Liesse, donation in 1843	60,000
Saint Acheul, House for Novitiates.	400,000
Nantes, a house	100,000
Quimper, ditto.	40,000
Laval, house and church	150,000
Rennes, a house	20,000
Vannes, ditto	20,000
Metz, ditto	40,000
Strasbourg	60,000
Rouen, ditto	15,000

By this it appears that these various items amount to little less than two millions. Teaching, moreover, is another important source of revenue to the Jesuits. The college at Broyclette alone brings in 200,000 francs. The two provinces in France (for the General of the Jesuits at Rome has divided France into two provinces, Lyons and Paris) possess, besides a large sum in ready money, Austrian bonds of more than 200,000 francs. Their Propagation of Faith furnishes annually some 50,000 francs; and the harvest which the priests collect by their sermons amounts to 150,000 francs. The alms given for charity may be estimated at the same figure, producing together a revenue of 540,000 francs. Now, to this revenue may be added the produce of the sale of the society's works, and the profit obtained by hawking pictures. Each plate costs, design and engraving included, about 600 francs, off which are struck about 10,000 copies at 40 francs per thousand, and there is a further expense of 250 francs to their publisher; and they obtain a net profit of 210 francs on every thousand. This indeed is working to advantage. And it can easily be imagined with what rapidity all these are sold. The fathers themselves are the travelers for the society, and it would be difficult to find more zealous or persevering ones. They are always well received, and do not know what it is to meet with a refusal. They always take care that the publisher should be one of their own body. The first person whom they selected for this occupation was one of their members possessing some money; but they were obliged, notwithstanding, to make certain advances to enable him to defray the expenses of its first establishment. But when they became fully convinced of the success of their undertaking, they suddenly called in these advances, which the publisher was not in a condition to pay. They were perfectly aware of this, and superseded him by a wealthy successor, with whom they could make a better bargain; and thus, without remorse, they ruined the man by thrusting him from an appointment of which they had morally guaranteed the continuance.”

Order, consists in never quitting his superior, watching his least actions, spying into his very thoughts, and reporting all to Rome.

In spite of his usual impassibility, Rodin appeared visibly uneasy



David Samuel.

and absent in mind; he answered even more briefly than usual to the commands and questions of Father d'Aigrigny, who had but just entered the room.

"Has anything new occurred during my absence?" asked he. "Are the reports still favorable?"

"Very favorable."

"Read them to me."

"Before giving this account to your reverence," said Rodin, "I must inform you that Morok has been two days in Paris."

"Morok?" said Abbé d'Aigrigny, with surprise. "I thought, on leaving Germany and Switzerland, he had received from Friburg the order to proceed southward. At Nismes or Avignon he would at this moment be useful as an agent; for the Protestants begin to move, and we fear a reaction against the Catholics."

"I do not know," said Rodin, "if Morok may not have had private reasons for changing his route. His ostensible reasons are, that he comes here to give performances."

"How so?"

"A dramatic agent, passing through Lyons, engaged him and his menagerie for the Porte-Saint-Martin Théâtre at a very high price. He says that he did not like to refuse such an offer."

"Well," said Father d'Aigrigny, shrugging his shoulders, "but, by distributing his little books, and selling prints and chaplets, as well as by the influence he would certainly exercise over the pious and ignorant people of the South or of Brittany, he might render services such as he can never perform in Paris."

"He is now below, with a kind of giant, who travels about with him. In his capacity of your reverence's old servant, Morok hoped to have the honor of kissing your hand this evening."

"Impossible — impossible; you know how much I am occupied. Have you sent to the Rue Saint François?"

"Yes, I have. The old Jew guardian has had notice from the notary. To-morrow, at six in the morning, the masons will unwall the door, and, for the first time since one hundred and fifty years, the house will be opened."

Father d'Aigrigny remained in thought for a moment, and then said to Rodin:

"On the eve of such a decisive day, we must neglect nothing, and call every circumstance to memory. Read me the copy of the note, inserted in the archives of the society a century and a half ago, on the subject of M. de Rennepont."

The secretary took the note from the case and read as follows:

"This 19th day of February, 1682, the Reverend Father-Provincial Alexander Bourdon sent the following advice, with these words in the margin: *Of extreme importance for the future.*

“We have discovered, by the confession of a dying person to one of our fathers, a very close secret.

“Marius de Rennepont, one of the most active and redoubtable partisans of the Reformed Religion, and one of the most determined enemies of our Holy Society, had apparently reëntered the pale of our Mother-Church, but with the sole design of saving his worldly goods, threatened with confiscation because of his irreligious and damnable errors. Evidence having been furnished by different persons of our Company to prove that the conversion of Rennepont was not sincere and in reality covered a sacrilegious lure, the possessions of the aforesaid gentleman, now considered a relapsed heretic, were confiscated by our gracious sovereign, his Majesty King Louis XIV., and the said Rennepont was condemned to the galleys for life.* He escaped his doom by a voluntary death; in consequence of which abominable crime, his body was dragged upon a hurdle and flung to the dogs on the highway.

“From these preliminaries we come to the great secret, which is of such importance to the future interests of our society.

“His Majesty Louis XIV in his paternal and Catholic goodness toward the Church in general, and our Order in particular, had granted to us the profit of this confiscation in acknowledgment of our services in discovering the infamous and sacrilegious relapse of the said Rennepont.

“But we have just learned FOR CERTAIN that a house situated in Paris, No. 3 Rue Saint François, and a sum of fifty thousand gold crowns have escaped this confiscation, and have consequently been stolen from our society.

“The house was conveyed, before the confiscation, by means of a feigned purchase, to a friend of Rennepont's—a good Catholic, unfortunately, as against him we cannot take any severe measures. Thanks to the culpable but secure connivance of his friend, the house has been walled up, and is only to be opened in a century and a half, according to the last will of Rennepont.

“As for the fifty thousand gold crowns, they have been placed in hands which, unfortunately, are hitherto unknown to us, in order to be invested and put out to use for one hundred and fifty years, at the expiration of which time they are to be divided between the then existing descendants of the said Rennepont; and it is calculated that this sum, increased by so many accumulations, will by then have become enormous, and will amount to at least forty or fifty millions of livres *turnoi*.

“From motives which are not known, but which are duly stated in a testamentary document, the said Rennepont has concealed from his family, whom the edicts against the Protestants have driven out of France, the investment of these fifty thousand crowns; and has only desired his relations to preserve in their line, from generation to generation, the charge to the last survivors to meet in Paris, Rue Saint François, a hundred and fifty years hence, on February the 13th, 1832. And that this charge might not be forgotten, he employed a person, whose description is known, but not his real occupation, to cause to be manufactured sundry bronze medals, on which the request and date are engraved, and to deliver one to each member of the family,—a measure the more necessary, as, from some other motive equally unknown, but probably explained in the testament, the heirs are to present themselves on the day in question, before noon, *in person*, and not by any attorney or representative, or to forfeit all claim to the inheritance.

“The stranger who undertook to distribute the medals to the different members of the family of Rennepont is a man of thirty to thirty-six years of age, of tall stature,

* Louis XIV.. the great king, punished with the galleys those Protestants who, once converted, often by force, afterward returned to their first belief. As for those Protestants who remained in France notwithstanding the rigor of the edicts against them, they were deprived of burial, dragged upon a hurdle, and given to the dogs.

and with a proud and sad expression of countenance. He has black eyebrows, very thick and singularly joined together. He is known as JOSEPH, and is much suspected of being an active and dangerous emissary of the wretched republicans and heretics of the Seven United Provinces.

“ ‘It results from these premises that this sum, surreptitiously confided by a relapsed heretic to unknown hands, has escaped the confiscation decreed in our favor by our well-beloved king. A serious fraud and injury has, therefore, been committed, and we are bound to take every means to recover this our right, if not immediately, at least in some future time. Our society being (for the greater glory of God and our Holy Father) imperishable, it will be easy, thanks to the connection we keep up with all parts of the world, by means of missions and other establishments, to follow the line of this family of Rennepont from generation to generation, without ever losing sight of it — so that a hundred and fifty years hence, at the moment of the division of this immense accumulation of property, our Company may claim the inheritance of which it has been so treacherously deprived, and recover it by any means in its power, *fais aut nefas*, even by craft or violence — our Company not being bound to act tenderly with the future detainees of our goods, of which we have been maliciously deprived by an infamous and sacrilegious heretic — and because it is right to defend, preserve, and recover one’s own property by every means which the Lord may place within one’s reach. Until, therefore, the complete restitution of this wealth, the family of Rennepont must be considered as reprobate and damnable, as the cursed seed of a Cain, and always to be watched with the utmost caution. And it is to be recommended that every year from this present date a sort of inquisition should be held as to the situation of the successive members of this family.’ ”

Rodin paused, and said to Father d’Aigrigny :

“ Here follows the account, year by year, of the history of this family, from the year 1682 to our own day. It will be useless to read this to your reverence.”

“ Quite useless,” said Abbé d’Aigrigny “ The note contains all the important facts.” Then, after a moment’s silence, he exclaimed, with an expression of triumphant pride : “ How great is the power of the Association, when founded upon tradition and perpetuity ! Thanks to this note, inserted in our archives a century and a half ago, this family has been watched from generation to generation ; our Order has always had its eyes upon them, following them to all points of the globe to which exile had distributed them ; and at last, to-morrow, we shall obtain possession of this property, at first inconsiderable, but which a hundred and fifty years have raised to a royal fortune. Yes, we shall succeed, for we have foreseen every eventuality One thing only troubles me.”

“ What is that ? ” asked Rodin.

“ The information that we have in vain tried to obtain from the guardian of the house in the Rue Saint François. Has the attempt been once more made as I directed ? ”

“ It has been made.”

“ Well ? ”

"This time, as always before, the old Jew has remained impenetrable. Besides, he is almost in his second childhood, and his wife not much better."

"When I think," resumed Father d'Aigrigny, "that for a century and a half this house in the Rue Saint François has remained walled up, and that the care of it has been transmitted from generation to generation in this family of the Samuels, I cannot suppose that they have all been ignorant as to who were and are the successive holders of these funds, now become immense by accumulation."

"You have seen," said Rodin, "by the notes upon this affair that the Order has always carefully followed it up ever since 1682. At different periods attempts have been made to obtain information upon subjects not fully explained in the note of Father Bourdon. But this race of Jew guardians has ever remained dumb, and we must therefore conclude that they know nothing about it."

"That has always struck me as impossible; for the ancestor of these Samuels was present at the closing of the house, a hundred and fifty years ago. He was, according to the file, a servant or confidential clerk of De-Rennepont. It is impossible that he should not have known many things, the tradition of which must have been preserved in the family."

"If I were allowed to hazard a brief observation," began Rodin humbly.

"Speak."

"A few years ago we obtained certain information through the confessional that the funds were in existence, and that they had risen to an enormous amount."

"Doubtless; and it was that which called the attention of the Reverend Father-General so strongly to this affair."

"We know, then, what probably the descendants of the Rennepont family do not—the immense value of this inheritance?"

"Yes," answered Father d'Aigrigny, "the person who certified this fact in confession is worthy of all belief. Only lately the same declaration was renewed; but all the efforts of the confessor could not obtain the name of the trustee, or anything beyond the assertion that the money could not be in more honest hands."

"It seems to me, then," resumed Rodin, "that we are certain of what is most important."

"And who knows if the holder of this enormous sum will appear to-morrow in spite of the honesty ascribed to him? The nearer the moment, the more my anxiety increases. Ah!" continued Father d'Aigrigny, after a moment's silence, "the interests concerned are so

immense that the consequences of success are quite incalculable. However, all that it was possible to do has been at least tried."

To these words, which Father d'Aigrigny addressed to Rodin as if asking for his assent, the *Socius* returned no answer.

The abbé looked at him with surprise, and said: "Are you not of my opinion—could more have been attempted? Have we not gone to the extreme limit of the possible?"

Rodin bowed respectfully, but remained mute.

"If you think we have omitted some precaution," cried Father d'Aigrigny, with a sort of uneasy impatience, "speak out! We have still time. Once more, do you think it is possible to do more than I have done? All the other descendants being removed, when Gabriel appears to-morrow in the Rue Saint François will he not be the only representative of this family, and consequently the rightful possessor of this immense fortune? Now, according to his act of renunciation, and the provisions of our statutes, it is not to him, but to the Order, that these possessions must fall. Could I have acted better, or in any other manner? Speak frankly!"

"I cannot permit myself to offer an opinion on this subject," replied Rodin humbly, and again bowing; "the success of the measures taken must answer your reverence."

Father d'Aigrigny shrugged his shoulders and reproached himself for having asked advice of this writing-machine that served him for a secretary, and to whom he only ascribed three qualities—memory, discretion, and exactness.



FATHER D'AIGRIGNY AND ROBIN.

CHAPTER XI

THE STRANGLER



AFTER a moment's silence Father d'Aigrigny resumed: "Read me to-day's report on the situation of each of the persons designated."

"Here is that of this evening; it has just come."

"Let us hear."

Rodin read as follows: "Jacques Rennepont, *alias* Sleepinbuff, was seen in the interior of the debtors' prison at eight o'clock this evening."

"He will not disturb us to-morrow. One; go on!"

"The lady-superior of St. Mary's Convent, warned by the Princess de Saint-Dizier, has thought fit to confine still more strictly the Demoiselles Rose and Blanche Simon. This evening at nine o'clock they have been carefully locked in their cells, and armed men will make their round in the convent garden during the night."

"Thanks to these precautions, there is nothing to fear from that side," said Father d'Aigrigny "Go on!"

"Dr. Baleinier, also warned by the Princess de Saint-Dizier, continues to have Mademoiselle de Cardoville very closely watched. At a quarter to nine the door of the building in which she is lodged was locked and bolted."

"That is still another cause the less for uneasiness."

"As for M. Hardy," resumed Rodin, "I have received this morning from Toulouse a letter from his intimate friend, M. de Bressac, who has been of such service to us in keeping the manufacturer away for some days longer. This letter contains a note addressed by M. Hardy to a confidential person, which M. de Bressac has thought fit to intercept and send to us as another proof of the success of the steps he has taken, and for which he hopes we shall give him credit, as to serve us, he adds, he betrays his friend in the most shameful manner, and acts a part in an odious comedy M. de Bressac trusts that in return for these good offices we will deliver up those papers which place him in our absolute

dependence, as they might ruin forever a woman he loves with an adulterous passion. He says that we ought to have pity on the horrible alternative in which he is placed—either to dishonor and ruin the woman he adores, or infamously to betray the confidence of his bosom friend.”

“These adulterous lamentations are not deserving of pity,” answered Father d’Aigrigny, with contempt. “We will see about that; M. de Bressac may still be useful to us. But let us hear this letter of M. Hardy, that iniquitous and republican manufacturer, worthy descendant of an accursed race, whom it is of the first importance to keep away.”

“Here is M. Hardy’s letter,” resumed Rodin. “To-morrow we will send it to the person to whom it is addressed.”

Rodin read as follows :

“TOULOUSE, February the 10th.

“At length I find a moment to write to you and to explain the cause of the sudden departure which, without alarming, must at least have astonished you. I write also to ask you a service; the facts may be stated in a few words. I have often spoken to you of Felix de Bressac, one of my boyhood mates, though not nearly so old as myself. We have always loved each other tenderly, and have shown too many proofs of mutual affection not to count upon each other. He is a brother to me. You know all I mean by that expression. Well, a few days ago he wrote to me from Toulouse, where he was to spend some time :

““If you love me, come; I have the greatest need of you. At once! Your consolations may perhaps give me the courage to live. If you arrive too late—why, forgive me, and think sometimes of him who will be yours to the last.”

“Judge of my grief and fear on receipt of the above. I sent instantly for post-horses. My old foreman, whom I esteem and revere (the father of General Simon), hearing that I was going to the south, begged me to take him with me, and to leave him for some days in the department of the Creuse to examine some iron-works recently founded there. I consented willingly to this proposition, as I should at least have some one to whom I could pour out the grief and anxiety which had been caused me by this letter from Bressac. I arrive at Toulouse; they tell me that he left the evening before, taking arms with him, a prey to the most violent despair. It was impossible at first to tell whither he had gone; after two days some indications, collected with great trouble, put me upon his track. At last, after a thousand adventures, I found him in a miserable village. Never—no, never—have I seen despair like this. No violence, but a dreadful dejection, a savage silence. At first he almost repulsed me; then, this horrible agony having reached its height, he softened by degrees, and in about a quarter of an hour threw himself into my arms, bathed in tears. Beside him were his loaded pistols; one day later and all would have been over. I cannot tell you the reason of his despair; I am not at liberty to do so; but it did not greatly astonish me. Now there is a complete cure to effect. We must calm and soothe and heal this poor soul, which has been cruelly wounded. The hand of friendship is alone equal to this delicate task, and I have good hope of success. I have therefore persuaded him to travel for some time; movement and change of scene will be favorable to him. I shall take him first to Nice; we set out to-morrow. If he wishes to prolong this excursion I shall do so too, for my affairs do not imperiously demand my presence in Paris before the end of March.

“As for the service I have to ask of you, it is conditional. These are the facts :

“According to some family papers that belonged to my mother, it seems I have a certain interest to present myself at No. 3 Rue Saint François, in Paris, on the 13th of February. I had inquired about it, and could learn nothing, except that this house, of very antique appearance, has been shut up for the last hundred and fifty years, through a whim of one of my maternal ancestors, and that it is to be opened on the 13th of this month, in presence of the co-heirs, who, if I have any, are quite unknown to me. Not being able to attend myself, I have written to my foreman, the father of General Simon, in whom I have the greatest confidence, and whom I had left behind in the department of Creuse, to set out for Paris, and to be present at the opening of this house, not as an agent (which would be useless), but as a spectator, and inform me at Nice what has been the result of this romantic notion of my ancestor's. As it is possible that my foreman may arrive too late to accomplish this mission, I should be much obliged if you would inquire at my house at Plessy, if he has yet come, and in case of his still being absent, if you would take his place at the opening of the house in the Rue Saint François.

“I believe that I have made a very small sacrifice for my friend Bressac, in not being in Paris on that day. But had the sacrifice been immense, I should have made it with pleasure, for my care and friendship are at present most necessary to the man whom I look upon as a brother.

“So, go to the opening of this house, I pray you, and, begging you to be kind enough to write to me, ‘to be called for,’ at Nice, the result of your visit of inquiry, I remain, etc., etc.

“FRANÇOIS HARDY.”

“Though his presence cannot be of any great importance, it would be preferable that Marshal Simon's father should not attend at the opening of this house to-morrow,” said Father d'Aigrigny. “But no matter, M. Hardy himself is out of the way. There only remains the young Indian.”

“As for him,” continued the abbé, with a thoughtful air, “we acted wisely in letting M. Norval set out with presents of Mademoiselle de Cardoville. The doctor who accompanies M. Norval, and who was chosen by M. Baleinier, will inspire no suspicion.”

“None,” answered Rodin. “His letter of yesterday is completely satisfactory.”

“There is nothing, then, to fear from the Indian prince,” said D'Aigrigny. “All goes well.”

“As for Gabriel,” resumed Rodin, “he has again written this morning, to obtain from your reverence the interview that he has vainly solicited for the last three days. He is affected by the rigor exercised toward him, in forbidding him to leave the house for these five days past.”

“To-morrow, when we take him to the Rue Saint François, I will hear what he has to say. It will be time enough. Thus, at this hour,” said Father D'Aigrigny, with an air of triumphant satisfaction, “all the descendants of this family whose presence might ruin our projects are so placed that it is absolutely impossible for them to be at the Rue Saint François to-morrow before noon, while Gabriel will be sure to be there. At last our end is gained.”

Two cautious knocks at the door interrupted Father d'Aigrigny.

"Come in," said he.

An old servant in black presented himself, and said:

"There is a man downstairs who wishes to speak instantly to M. Rodin on very urgent business."

"His name?" asked Father d'Aigrigny.

"He would not tell his name; but he says that he comes from M. Van Dael, a merchant in Java."

Father d'Aigrigny and Rodin exchanged a glance of surprise, almost of alarm.

"See what this man is," said D'Aigrigny to Rodin, unable to conceal his uneasiness, "and then come and give me an account of it." Then, addressing the servant, he added: "Show him in." And exchanging another expressive sign with Rodin, Father D'Aigrigny instantly disappeared by a side-door.

A minute after, Faringhea, the ex-chief of the Stranglers, appeared before Rodin, who instantly remembered having seen him at Cardoville.

The *Socius* started, but he did not wish to appear to recollect his visitor. Still bending over his desk, he seemed not to see Faringhea, but wrote hastily some words on a sheet of paper that lay before him.

"Sir," said the servant, astonished at the silence of Rodin, "here is the person."

Rodin folded the note that he had so precipitately written, and said to the servant:

"Let this be taken to its address. Wait for an answer."

The servant bowed and went out. Then Rodin, without rising, fixed his little reptile-eyes on Faringhea, and said to him courteously:

"To whom, sir, have I the honor of speaking?"

CHAPTER XII

THE TWO BROTHERS OF THE GOOD WORK

FARINGHEA, as we have before stated, though born in India, had traveled a good deal, and frequented the European factories in different parts of Asia. Speaking well both English and French, and full of intelligence and sagacity, he was perfectly civilized. Instead of answering Rodin's question, he turned upon him a fixed and searching look. The *Socius*, provoked by this silence, and foreseeing vaguely that Faringhea's arrival had some connection — direct or indirect — with Djalma, repeated, though still with the greatest coolness:

“To whom, sir, have I the honor of speaking?”

“Do you not recognize me?” said Faringhea, advancing two steps nearer to Rodin's chair.

“I do not think I have ever had the honor of seeing you,” answered the other coldly

“But I recognize you,” said Faringhea; “I saw you at Cardoville the day that a ship and a steamer were wrecked together.”

“At Cardoville? It is very possible, sir I was there when a shipwreck took place.”

“And that day I called you by your name, and you asked me what I wanted. I replied: ‘Nothing *now*, brother — hereafter, much.’ The time has arrived. I have come to ask for much.”

“My dear sir,” said Rodin, still impassible, “before we continue this conversation, which appears hitherto tolerably obscure, I must repeat my wish to be informed to whom I have the advantage of speaking. You have introduced yourself here under the pretext of a commission from Mynheer Joshua Van Dael, a respectable merchant of Batavia, and —”

“You know the writing of M. Van Dael?” said Faringhea, interrupting Rodin.

“I know it perfectly.”

"Look!" The half-caste drew from his pocket (he was shabbily dressed in European clothes) a long dispatch, which he had taken from Mahal the Smuggler, after strangling him on the beach near Batavia. These papers he placed before Rodin's eyes, but without quitting his hold of them.

"It is indeed M. Van Dael's writing," said Rodin; and he stretched out his hand toward the letter, which Faringhea quickly and prudently returned to his pocket.

"Allow me to observe, my dear sir, that you have a singular manner of executing a commission," said Rodin. "This letter, being to my address, and having been intrusted to you by M. Van Dael, you ought ——"

"This letter was not intrusted to me by M. Van Dael," said Faringhea, interrupting Rodin.

"How, then, is it in your possession?"

"A Javanese smuggler betrayed me. Van Dael had secured a passage to Alexandria for this man, and had given him this letter to carry with him for the European mail. I strangled the smuggler, took the letter, made the passage — and here I am."

The Strangler had pronounced these words with an air of savage boasting; his wild, intrepid glance did not quail before the piercing look of Rodin, who, at this strange confession, had hastily raised his head to observe the speaker.

Faringhea thought to astonish or intimidate Rodin by these ferocious words; but, to his great surprise, the *Socius*, impassible as a corpse, said to him, quite simply:

"Oh! they strangle people in Java?"

"Yes, there *and* elsewhere," answered Faringhea, with a bitter smile.

"I would prefer to disbelieve you; but I am surprised at your sincerity, M. ——, what is your name?"

"Faringhea."

"Well, then, M. Faringhea, what do you wish to come to? You have obtained, by an abominable crime, a letter addressed to me, and now you hesitate to deliver it ——"

"Because I have read it, and it may be useful to me."

"Oh! you have read it?" said Rodin, disconcerted for a moment. Then he resumed: "It is true that, judging by your mode of possessing yourself of other people's correspondence, we cannot expect any great amount of honesty on your part. And, pray, what have you found so useful to you in this letter?"

"I have found, brother, that you are, like myself, a son of the Good Work."

"Of what good work do you speak?" asked Rodin, not a little surprised.

Faringhea replied with an expression of bitter irony:



"Joshua says to you in his letter — 'Obedience and courage, secrecy and patience, craft and audacity, union between us, who have the world for our country, the brethren for our family, Rome for our queen.'"

"It is possible that M. Van Dael has written thus to me. Pray, sir, what do you conclude from it?"

"We too have the world for our country, brother, our accomplices for our family, and for queen *Bowanee*."

"I do not know that saint," said Rodin humbly.

"It is *our* Rome," answered the Strangler. "Van Dael speaks to you of those of your Order who, scattered over all the earth, labor for the glory of Rome, your queen. Those of our band labor also in divers countries for the glory of *Bowanee*."

"And who are these sons of *Bowanee*, M. Faringhea?"

"Men of resolution, audacious, patient, crafty, obstinate, who, to make the Good Work succeed, would sacrifice country and parents, and sister and brother, and who regard as enemies all not of their band!"

"There seems to be much that is good in the persevering and exclusively religious spirit of such an order," said Rodin, with a modest and sanctified air; "only, one must know your ends and objects."

"The same as your own, brother; we make corpses."*

"Corpses!" cried Rodin.

"In his letter," resumed Faringhea, "Van Dael tells you that the greatest glory of your order is to make a 'corpse of man.' Our work also is to make corpses of men. Man's death is sweet to *Bowanee*."

"But, sir," cried Rodin, "M. Van Dael speaks of the soul, of the will, of the mind, which are to be brought down by discipline."

"It is true; you kill the soul and we the body. Give me your hand, brother, for you also are hunters of men."

"But once more, sir, understand that we only meddle with the will, the mind," said Rodin.

"And what are bodies deprived of soul, will, thought but mere corpses? Come, come, brother; the dead we make by the cord are not more icy and inanimate than those you make by your discipline. Take my hand, brother, Rome and *Bowanee* are sisters."

Notwithstanding his apparent calmness, Rodin could not behold without some secret alarm a wretch like Faringhea in possession of a long letter from Van Dael, wherein mention must necessarily have been made of *Djalma*. Rodin believed, indeed, that he had rendered it impossible for the young Indian to be at Paris on the morrow, but not knowing what connection might have been formed since the shipwreck between the prince and the half-caste, he looked upon Faringhea as a man who might probably be very dangerous.

* The doctrine of passive and absolute obedience, the principal tool in the hands of the Jesuits, as summed up in these terrible words of the dying Loyola — *that every member of the Order should be in the hands of his superiors as a dead body — perinde ac cadaver.*

But the more uneasy the *Socius* felt in himself, the more he affected to appear calm and disdainful. He replied, therefore: "This comparison between Rome and Bowanee is no doubt very amusing; but what, sir, do you deduce from it?"

"I wish to show you, brother, what I am, and of what I am capable, to convince you that it is better to have me for a friend than an enemy."

"In other terms, sir," said Rodin, with contemptuous irony, "you belong to a murderous sect in India, and you wish, by a transparent allegory, to lead me to reflect on the fate of the man from whom you have stolen the letter addressed to me. In my turn, I will take the freedom just to observe to you, in all humility, M. Faringhea, that here it is not permitted to strangle anybody, and that if you were to think fit to make any corpses for the love of Bowanee, your goddess, we should make you a head shorter, for the love of another divinity, commonly called Justice."

"And what would they do to me if I tried to poison any one?"

"I will again humbly observe to you, M. Faringhea, that I have no time to give you a course of criminal jurisprudence; but, believe me, you had better resist the temptation to strangle or poison any one. One word more: will you deliver up to me the letters of M. Van Dael or not?"

"The letters relative to Prince Djalma?" said the half-caste.

He looked fixedly at Rodin, who, notwithstanding a sharp and sudden twinge, remained impenetrable, and answered with the utmost simplicity: "Not knowing what the letters which you, sir, are pleased to keep from me may contain, it is impossible for me to answer your question. I beg, and if necessary I demand, that you will hand me those letters—or that you will retire."

"In a few minutes, brother, you will entreat me to remain."

"I doubt it."

"A few words will operate this miracle. If just now I spoke to you about poisoning, brother, it was because you sent a doctor to Cardoville to poison (at least for a time) Prince Djalma."

In spite of himself, Rodin started almost imperceptibly, as he replied:

"I do not understand you."

"It is true that I am a poor foreigner, and doubtless speak with an accent; I will try and explain myself better. I know, by Van Dael's letters, the interest you have that Prince Djalma should not be here to-morrow, and all that you have done with this view. Do you understand me now?"

"I have no answer for you."

Two cautious taps at the door here interrupted the conversation.

"Come in," said Rodin.

"The letter has been taken to its address, sir," said the old servant, bowing, "and here is the answer."

Rodin took the paper, and before he opened it said courteously to Faringhea:

"With your permission, sir?"

"Make no ceremonies," said the half-caste.

"You are very kind," replied Rodin, as, having read the letter he received, he wrote hastily some words at the bottom, saying: "Send this back to the same address."

The servant bowed respectfully, and withdrew.

"Now can I continue?" asked the half-caste of Rodin.

"Certainly"

"I will continue, then," resumed Faringhea. "The day before yesterday, just as the prince, all wounded as he was, was about, by my advice, to take his departure for Paris, a fine carriage arrived with superb presents for Djalma, from an unknown friend. In this carriage were two men—one sent by the unknown friend; the other a doctor, sent by you to attend upon Djalma and accompany him to Paris. It was a charitable act, brother—was it not so?"

"Go on with your story, sir"

"Djalma set out yesterday. By declaring that the prince's wound would grow seriously worse if he did not lie down in the carriage during all the journey, the doctor got rid of the envoy of the unknown friend, who went away by himself. The doctor wished to get rid of me too, but Djalma so strongly insisted upon it that I accompanied the prince and doctor. Yesterday evening we had come about half the distance. The doctor proposed we should pass the night at an inn. 'We have plenty of time,' said he, 'to reach Paris by to-morrow evening,' the prince having told him that he must absolutely be in Paris by the evening of the 12th. The doctor had been very pressing to set out alone with the prince. I knew by Van Dael's letter that it was of great importance to you for Djalma not to be here on the 13th; I had my suspicions, and I asked the doctor if he knew you; he answered with an embarrassed air, and then my suspicion became certainty. When we reached the inn, while the doctor was occupied with Djalma, I went up to the room of the former and examined a box full of vials that he had brought with him. One of them contained opium—and then I guessed ——"

"What did you guess, sir?"

"You shall know. The doctor said to Djalma, before he left him: 'Your wound is doing well, but the fatigue of the journey might bring

on inflammation ; it will be good for you, in the course of to-morrow, to take a soothing potion that I will make ready this evening to have with us in the carriage.' The doctor's plan was a simple one," added Faringhea ; " to-day the prince was to take the potion at four or five o'clock in the afternoon and fall into a deep sleep, the doctor to grow uneasy and stop the carriage, to declare that it would be dangerous to continue the journey, to pass the night at an inn and keep close watch over the prince, whose stupor was only to cease when it suited your purposes. That was your design ; it was cleverly planned ; I chose to make use of it for myself, and I have succeeded."

" All that you are talking about, my dear sir," said Rodin, biting his nails, " is pure Hebrew to me."

" No doubt, because of my accent. But tell me, have you heard speak of *array-mow* ?"

" No."

" Your loss ! It is an admirable production of the island of Java, so fertile in poisons."

" What is that to me ?" said Rodin in a sharp voice, but hardly able to dissemble his growing anxiety.

" It concerns you nearly. We sons of Bowanee have a horror of shedding blood," resumed Faringhea ; " to pass the cord round the neck of our victims we wait till they are asleep. When their sleep is not deep enough we know how to make it deeper. We are skillful at our work ; the serpent is not more cunning or the lion more valiant. Djalma himself bears our mark. The *array-mow* is an impalpable powder, and by letting the sleeper inhale a few grains of it, or by mixing it with the tobacco to be smoked by a waking man, we can throw our victim into a stupor from which nothing will rouse him. If we fear to administer too strong a dose at once, we let the sleeper inhale a little at different times, and we can thus prolong the trance at pleasure, and without any danger, as long as a man does not require meat and drink—say thirty or forty hours. You see that opium is mere trash compared to this divine narcotic. I had brought some of this with me from Java,—as a mere curiosity, you know,—without forgetting the counter-poison."

" Oh ! there is a counter-poison, then ?" said Rodin mechanically.

" Just as there are people quite contrary to what we are, brother of the Good Work. The Javanese call the juice of this root *tooboe* ; it dissipates the stupor caused by the *array-mow* as the sun disperses the clouds. Now yesterday evening, being certain of the projects of your emissary against Djalma, I waited till the doctor was in bed and asleep. I crept into his room and made him inhale such a dose of *array-mow* that he is probably sleeping still."

"Miscreant!" cried Rodin, more and more alarmed by this narrative, for Faringhea had dealt a terrible blow at the machinations of the *Socius* and his friends. "You risk poisoning the doctor."

"Yes, brother; just as he ran the risk of poisoning Djalma. This morning we set out, leaving your doctor at the inn, plunged in a deep sleep. I was alone in the carriage with Djalma. He smoked like a true Indian. Some grains of array-mow mixed with the tobacco in his long pipe first made him drowsy; a second dose that he inhaled sent him to sleep; and so I left him at the inn where we stopped. Now, brother, it depends upon me to leave Djalma in his trance, which will last till to-morrow evening, or to rouse him from it on the instant. Exactly as you comply with my demands or not, Djalma will or will not be in the Rue Saint François to-morrow."

So saying, Faringhea drew from his pocket the medal belonging to Djalma and observed, as he showed it to Rodin:

"You see that I tell you the truth. During Djalma's sleep I took from him this medal, the only indication he has of the place where he ought to be to-morrow. I finish, then, as I began: Brother, I have come to ask you for a great deal."

For some minutes Rodin had been biting his nails to the quick, as was his custom when seized with a fit of dumb and concentrated rage. Just then the bell of the porter's lodge rang three times in a particular manner. Rodin did not appear to notice it, and yet, a sudden light sparkled in his small reptile-eyes; while Faringhea, with his arms folded, looked at him with an expression of triumph and disdainful superiority.

The *Socius* bent down his head, remained silent for some seconds, took mechanically a pen from his desk and began to gnaw the feather, as if in deep reflection upon what Faringhea had just said. Then, throwing down the pen upon the desk, he turned suddenly toward the half-caste and addressed him with an air of profound contempt:

"Now, really, M. Faringhea, do you think to make game of us with your cock-and-bull stories?"

Amazed, in spite of his audacity, the half-caste recoiled a step.

"What, sir!" resumed Rodin. "You come here, into a respectable house, to boast that you have stolen letters, strangled this man, drugged that other? Why, sir, it is downright madness. I wished to hear you to the end to see to what extent you would carry your audacity,—for none but a monstrous rascal would venture to plume himself on such infamous crimes. But I prefer believing that they exist only in your imagination."

As he barked out these words, with a degree of animation not usual

in him, Rodin rose from his seat and approached the chimney; while Faringhea, who had not yet recovered from his surprise, looked at him in silence. In a few seconds, however, the half-caste returned, with a gloomy and savage mien:

“Take care, brother; do not force me to prove to you that I have told the truth.”

“Come, come, sir, you must be fresh from the antipodes to believe us Frenchmen such easy dupes. You have, you say, the prudence of a serpent and the courage of a lion. I do not know if you are a courageous lion, but you are certainly not a prudent serpent. What! you have about you a letter from M. Van Dael, by which I might be compromised—supposing all this not to be a fable; you have left Prince Djalma in a stupor, which would serve my projects, and from which you alone can rouse him; you are able, you say, to strike a terrible blow at my interests,—and yet you do not consider (bold lion! crafty serpent as you are!) that I only want to gain twenty-four hours upon you. Now, you come from the ends of India to Paris, an unknown stranger; you believe me to be as great a scoundrel as yourself, since you call me brother, and do not once consider that you are here in my power; that this street and house are solitary, and that I could have three or four persons to bind you in a second, savage Strangler though you are!—and that just by pulling this bell-rope,” said Rodin, as he took it in his hand. “Do not be alarmed,” added he, with a diabolical smile, as he saw Faringhea make an abrupt movement of surprise and fright; “would I give you notice if I meant to act in this manner? But just answer me. Once bound and put in confinement for twenty-four hours, how could you injure me? Would it not be easy for me to possess myself of Van Dael’s letter and Djalma’s medal? and the latter, plunged in a stupor till to-morrow evening, need not trouble me at all. You see, therefore, that your threats are vain—because they rest upon falsehood, because it is not true that Prince Djalma is here and in your power. Begone, sir—leave the house; and, when next you wish to make dupes, show more judgment in the selection.”

Faringhea seemed struck with astonishment. All that he had just heard seemed very probable. Rodin might seize upon him, the letter, and the medal, and, by keeping him prisoner, prevent Djalma from being awakened. And yet Rodin ordered him to leave the house at the moment when Faringhea had imagined himself so formidable.

As he thought for the motives of this inexplicable conduct, it struck him that Rodin, notwithstanding the proofs he had brought him, did not yet believe that Djalma was in his power. On that theory, the contempt of Van Dael’s correspondent admitted of a natural explanation.

But Rodin was playing a bold and skillful game; and, while he appeared to mutter to himself, as in anger, he was observing with intense anxiety the Strangler's countenance.

The latter, almost certain that he had divined the secret motive of Rodin, replied; "I am going—but one word more. You think I deceive you?"

"I am certain of it. You have told me nothing but a tissue of fables, and I have lost much time in listening to them. Spare me the rest; it is late—and I should like to be alone."

"One minute more: you are a man, I see, from whom nothing should be hid," said Faringhea. "From Djalma I could now only expect alms and disdain; for, with a character like his, to say to him, 'Pay me, because I might have betrayed you, and did not,' would be to provoke his anger and contempt. I could have killed him twenty times over, but his day is not yet come," said the Strangler, with a gloomy air; "and to wait for that and other fatal days, I must have gold, much gold. You alone can pay me for the betrayal of Djalma, for you alone profit by it. You refuse to hear me, because you think I am deceiving you. But I took the direction of the inn where we stopped—and here it is. Send some one to ascertain the truth of what I tell you, and then you will believe me. But the price of my services will be high; for I told you that I wanted much."

So saying, Faringhea offered a printed card to Rodin; the *Socius*, who, out of the corner of his eye, followed all the half-caste's movements, appeared to be absorbed in thought and taking no heed of anything.

"Here is the address," repeated Faringhea, as he held out the card to Rodin; "assure yourself that I do not lie."

"Eh? what is it?" said the other, casting a rapid but stolen glance at the address, which he read greedily, without touching the card.

"Take this address," repeated the half-caste, "and you may then assure yourself——"

"Really, sir," cried Rodin, pushing back the card with his hand, "your impudence confounds me. I repeat that I wish to have nothing in common with you. For the last time, I tell you to leave the house. I know nothing about your Prince Djalma. You say you can injure me—do so—make no ceremonies—but, in Heaven's name, leave me to myself."

So saying, Rodin rang the bell violently.

Faringhea made a movement as if to stand upon the defensive; but only the old servant, with his quiet and placid mien, appeared at the door.

"Lapierre, light the gentleman out," said Rodin, pointing to Faringhea.

Terrified at Rodin's calmness, the half-caste hesitated to leave the room.

"What do you wait, sir?" said Rodin, remarking his hesitation. "I wish to be alone."

"So, sir," said Faringhea, as he withdrew slowly, "you refuse my offers? Take care! to-morrow it will be too late."

"I have the honor to be your most humble servant, sir," said Rodin, bowing courteously.

The Strangler went out, and the door closed upon him.

Immediately, Father d'Aigrigny entered from the next room. His countenance was pale and agitated.

"What have you done?" exclaimed he, addressing Rodin. "I have heard all. I am unfortunately too sure that this wretch spoke the truth. The Indian is in his power, and he goes to rejoin him."

"I think not," said Rodin humbly, as, bowing, he re-assumed his dull and submissive countenance.

"What will prevent this man from rejoining the prince?"

"Allow me. As soon as the rascal was shown in, I knew him; and so, before speaking a word to him, I wrote a few lines to Morok, who was waiting below with Goliath till your reverence should be at leisure. Afterward, in the course of the conversation, when they brought me Morok's answer, I added some fresh instructions, seeing the turn that affairs were taking."

"And what was the use of all this, since you have let the man leave the house?"

"Your reverence will perhaps deign to observe that he did not leave it till he had given me the direction of the hotel where the Indian now is, thanks to my innocent stratagem of appearing to despise him. But, if it had failed, Faringhea would still have fallen into the hands of Goliath and Morok, who are waiting for him in the street, a few steps from the door. Only we should have been rather embarrassed, as we should not have known where to find Prince Djalma."

"More violence!" said Father d'Aigrigny, with repugnance.

"It is to be regretted, very much regretted," replied Rodin; "but it was necessary to follow out the system already adopted."

"Is that meant for a reproach?" said Father d'Aigrigny, who began to think that Rodin was something more than a mere writing-machine.

"I could not permit myself to blame your reverence," said Rodin, cringing almost to the ground. "But all that will be required is to confine this man for twenty-four hours."

"And afterward—his complaints?"

“Such a scoundrel as he is will not dare to complain. Besides, he left this house in freedom. Morok and Goliath will bandage his eyes when they seize him. The house has another entrance in the Rue Vieille des Ursins. At this hour, and in such a storm, no one will be passing through this deserted quarter of the town. The knave will be confused by the change of place; they will put him into a cellar of the new building, and to-morrow night, about the same hour, they will restore him to liberty with the like precautions. As for the East Indian, we now know where to find him; we must send to him a confidential person, and, if he recovers from his trance, there would be, in my humble opinion,” said Rodin modestly, “a very simple and quiet manner of keeping him away from the Rue Saint François all day to-morrow.”

The same servant with the mild countenance, who had introduced and shown out Faringhea, here entered the room, after knocking discreetly at the door. He held in his hand a sort of game-bag, which he gave to Rodin, saying: “Here is what M. Morok has just brought; he came in by the Rue Vieille.”

The servant withdrew, and Rodin, opening the bag, said to Father d'Aigrigny, as he showed him the contents:

“The medal and Van Dael's letter. Morok has been quick at his work.”

“One more danger avoided,” said the marquis; “it is a pity to be forced to such measures.”

“We must only blame the rascal who has obliged us to have recourse to them. I will send instantly to the hotel where the Indian lodges.”

“And, at seven in the morning, you will conduct Gabriel to the Rue Saint François. It is there that I must have with him the interview which he has so earnestly demanded these three days.”

“I informed him of it this evening, and he awaits your orders.”

“At last, then,” said Father d'Aigrigny, “after so many struggles, and fears, and crosses, only a few hours separate us from the moment which we have so long desired!”

.

We now conduct the reader to the house in the Rue Saint François.

PART XI

THE 13TH OF FEBRUARY

CHAPTER I

THE HOUSE IN THE RUE SAINT FRANÇOIS



ON entering the Rue Saint Gervais, by the Rue Doré (in the Marais), you would have found yourself, at the epoch of this narrative, directly opposite to an enormously high wall, the stones of which were black and worm-eaten with age. This wall, which extended nearly the whole length of that solitary street, served to support a terrace shaded by trees of some hundred years old, which thus grew about forty feet above the causeway. Through their thick branches appeared the stone front, peaked roof, and tall brick chimneys of an antique house, the entrance of which was situated in the Rue Saint François, not far from the Rue Saint Gervais corner.

Nothing could be more gloomy than the exterior of this abode. On the entrance-side also was a very high wall, pierced with two or three loop-holes, strongly grated. A carriage gateway in massive oak, barred with iron, and studded with large nail-heads, whose primitive color disappeared beneath a thick layer of mud, dust, and rust, fitted close into the arch of a deep recess, forming the swell of a bay-window above. In one of these massive gates was a smaller door, which served for ingress and egress to Samuel the Jew, the guardian of this dreary abode. On passing the threshold, you came to a passage, formed in the building which faced in the street. In this building was the lodging of Samuel, with

its windows opening upon the rather spacious inner court-yard, through the railing of which you perceived the garden. In the middle of this garden stood a two-storied stone house, so strangely built that you had to mount a flight of steps, or rather a double flight of at least twenty steps, to reach the door, which had been walled up a hundred and fifty years before. The window-blinds of this habitation had been replaced by large thick plates of lead, hermetically soldered, and kept in by frames of iron clamped in the stone. Moreover, completely to intercept air and light, and thus to guard against decay within and without, the roof had been covered with thick sheets of lead, as well as the vents of the tall chimneys, which had previously been bricked up. The same precautions had been taken with respect to a small square belvedere, situated on the top of the house; this glass cage was covered with a sort of dome, soldered to the roof. Only, in consequence of some singular fancy, in every one of the leaden plates, which concealed the four sides of the belvedere, corresponding to the cardinal points, seven little round holes had been bored in the form of a cross, and were easily distinguishable from the outside. Everywhere else the plates of lead were completely unpierced. Thanks to these precautions, and to the substantial structure of the building, nothing but a few outward repairs had been necessary; and the apartments, entirely removed from the influence of the external air, no doubt remained, during a century and a half, exactly in the same state as at the time of their being shut up.

The aspect of walls in crevices, of broken, worm-eaten shutters, of a roof half fallen in, and windows covered with wall-flowers, would perhaps have been less sad than the appearance of this stone house, plated with iron and lead, and preserved like a mausoleum.

The garden, completely deserted, and only regularly visited once a week by Samuel, presented to the view, particularly in summer, an incredible confusion of parasites and brambles. The trees, left to themselves, had shot forth and mingled their branches in all directions; some straggling vines, reproduced from off-shoots, had crept along the ground to the foot of the trees, and, climbing up their trunks, had twined themselves about them, and encircled their highest branches with their inextricable net. You could only pass through this virgin forest by following the path made by the guardian, to go from the grating to the house, the approaches to which were a little sloped to let the water run off, and carefully paved to the width of about ten feet. Another narrow path, which extended all round the inclosure, was every night perambulated by two or three Pyrenean dogs—a faithful race, which had been perpetuated in the house during a century and a half.

Such was the habitation destined for the meeting of the descendants of the family of Rennepont.

The night which separated the 12th from the 13th day of February



Bathsheba.

was near its close. A calm had succeeded the storm, and the rain had ceased; the sky was clear and full of stars; the moon, on its decline, shone with a mild luster, and threw a melancholy light over that

deserted, silent house, whose threshold for so many years no human footstep had crossed.

A bright gleam of light, issuing from one of the windows of the guardian's dwelling, announced that Samuel was awake. Figure to yourself a tolerably large room, lined from top to bottom with old walnut wainscoting, browned to an almost black with age. Two half-extinguished brands are smoking amid the cinders on the hearth. On the stone mantel-piece, painted to resemble gray granite, stands an old iron candlestick, furnished with a meager candle, capped by an extinguisher. Near it one sees a pair of double-barreled pistols and a sharp cutlass, with a hilt of carved bronze, belonging to the seventeenth century. Moreover, a heavy rifle rests against one of the chimney-jambs. Four stools, an old oak press, and a square table with twisted legs formed the sole furniture of this apartment. Against the wall were systematically suspended a number of keys of different sizes, the shape of which bore evidence to their antiquity, while to their rings were affixed divers labels. The back of the old press, which moved by a secret spring, had been pushed aside, and discovered, built in the wall, a large and deep iron chest, the lid of which, being open, displayed the wondrous mechanism of one of those Florentine locks of the sixteenth century, which, better than any modern invention, set all picklocks at defiance; and, moreover, according to the notions of that age, are supplied with a thick lining of asbestos cloth, suspended by gold wire at a distance from the sides of the chest, for the purpose of rendering incombustible the articles contained in it.

A large cedar-wood box had been taken from this chest and placed upon a stool; it contained numerous papers, carefully arranged and docketed.

By the light of a brass lamp, the old keeper Samuel was writing in a small register, while Bathsheba, his wife, was dictating to him from an account. Samuel was about eighty-two years old, and notwithstanding his advanced age, a mass of gray curling hair covered his head. He was short, thin, nervous, and the involuntary petulance of his movements proved that years had not weakened his energy and activity; though out-of-doors, where, however, he made his appearance very seldom, he affected a sort of second childhood, as had been remarked by Rodin to Father d'Aigrigny. An old dressing-gown of maroon-colored camlet, with large sleeves, completely enveloped the old man, and reached to his feet. Samuel's features were cast in the pure, Eastern mold of his race. His complexion was of a dead yellow, his nose aquiline, his chin shaded by a little tuft of white beard, while projecting cheek-bones threw a harsh shadow upon the hollow and wrinkled cheeks. His

countenance was full of intelligence, fine sharpness, and sagacity. On his broad, high forehead one might read frankness, honesty, and firmness; his eyes, black and brilliant as an Arab's, were at once mild and piercing.

His wife, Bathsheba, some fifteen years younger than himself, was of tall stature, and dressed entirely in black. A low cap, of starched lawn, which reminded one of the grave head-dresses of Dutch matrons, encircled a pale and austere countenance, formerly of a rare and haughty beauty, and impressed with the scriptural character. Some lines in the forehead, caused by the almost continual knitting of her gray brows, showed that this woman had often suffered from the pressure of intense grief. At this very moment her countenance betrayed inexpressible sorrow. Her look was fixed, her head resting on her bosom. She had let her right hand, which held a small account-book, fall upon her lap, while the other hand grasped convulsively a long tress of jet-black hair which she wore about her neck. It was fastened by a golden clasp, about an inch square, in which under a plate of crystal, that shut in one side of it like a relic-case, could be seen a piece of linen, folded square, and almost entirely covered with dark, red spots that resembled blood a long time dried.

After a short silence, during which Samuel was occupied with his register, he read aloud what he had just been writing:

“‘Per contra, 5000 Austrian Metallics of 1000 florins, under date of October 19th, 1826.’”

After which enumeration Samuel raised his head and said to his wife: “Well, is it right, Bathsheba? Have you compared it with the account-book?”

Bathsheba did not answer.

Samuel looked at her, and seeing that she was absorbed in grief, said to her, with an expression of tender anxiety: “What is the matter? Good Heaven! what is the matter with you?”

“The 19th of October, 1826,” said she slowly, with her eyes still fixed and pressing yet more closely the lock of black hair which she wore about her neck; “it was a fatal day—for, Samuel, it was the date of the last letter which we received from ——”

Bathsheba was unable to proceed. She uttered a long sigh, and concealed her face in her hands.

“Oh! I understand you,” observed the old man, in a tremulous voice; “a father may be taken up by the thought of other cares; but the heart of a mother is ever wakeful.” Throwing his pen down upon the table, Samuel leaned his forehead upon his hands in sorrow.

Bathsheba resumed, as if she found a melancholy pleasure in these cruel remembrances:

"Yes; that was the last day on which our son, Abel, wrote to us from Germany, to announce to us that he had invested the funds according to your desire, and was going thence into Poland, to effect another operation."

"And in Poland he met the death of a martyr," added Samuel. "With no motive and no proof, they accused him falsely of coming to organize smuggling, and the Russian government, treating him as it treats our brothers in that land of cruel tyranny, condemned him to the dreadful punishment of the knout, without even hearing him in his defense. Why should they hear a Jew? What is a Jew? A creature below a serf, whom they reproach for all the vices that a degrading slavery has engendered. A Jew beaten to death? Who would trouble themselves about it?"

"And poor Abel! so good, so faithful, died beneath their stripes, partly from shame, partly from the wounds," said Bathsheba, shuddering. "One of our Polish brethren obtained with great difficulty permission to bury him. He cut off this lock of beautiful black hair—which, with this scrap of linen, bathed in the blood of our dear son, is all that now remains to us of him."

Bathsheba covered the hair and clasp with convulsive kisses.

"Alas!" said Samuel, drying his tears, which had burst forth at these sad recollections, "the Lord did not at last remove our child until the task which our family has accomplished faithfully for a century and a half was nearly at an end. Of what use will our race be henceforth upon earth?" added Samuel most bitterly. "Our duty is performed. This casket contains a royal fortune; and yonder house walled up for a hundred and fifty years, will be opened to-morrow to the descendants of my ancestor's benefactor."

So saying, Samuel turned his face sorrowfully toward the house, which he could see through the window. The dawn was just about to appear. The moon had set; belvedere, roof, and chimneys formed a black mass upon the dark blue of the starry firmament.

Suddenly Samuel grew pale, and, rising abruptly, said to his wife in a tremulous tone, while he still pointed to the house:

"Bathsheba! the seven points of light; just as it was thirty years ago. Look! look!"

Indeed, the seven round holes bored in the form of a cross in the leaden plates which covered the window of the belvedere sparkled like so many luminous points, as if some one in the house ascended with a light to the roof.

CHAPTER II

DEBIT AND CREDIT

FOR some seconds Samuel and Bathsheba remained motionless, with their eyes fixed in fear and uneasiness on the seven luminous points which shone through the darkness of the night from the summit of the belvedere; while, on the horizon, behind the house, a pale, rosy hue announced the dawn of day.

Samuel was the first to break silence, and he said to his wife, as he drew his hand across his brow: "The grief caused by the remembrance of our poor child has prevented us from reflecting that, after all, there should be nothing to alarm us in what we see."

"How so, Samuel?"

"My father always told me that he, and my grandfather before him, had seen such lights at long intervals."

"Yes, Samuel; but without being able, any more than ourselves, to explain the cause."

"Like my father and grandfather, we can only suppose that some secret passage gives admittance to persons who, like us, have some mysterious duty to fulfill in this dwelling. Besides, my father warned me not to be uneasy at these appearances, foretold by him, and now visible for the second time in thirty years."

"No matter for that, Samuel, it does strike one as if it was something supernatural."

"The days of miracles are over," said the Jew, shaking his head sorrowfully; "many of the old houses in this quarter have subterraneous communication with distant places; some extending even to the Seine

and the Catacombs. Doubtless, this house is so situated, and the persons who make these rare visits enter by some such means."

"But that the belvedere should be thus lighted up!"

"According to the plan of the building, you know that the belvedere forms a kind of skylight to the apartment called the *Great Hall of Mourning*, situated on the upper story. As it is completely dark, in consequence of the closing of all the windows, they must use a light to visit this Hall of Mourning—a room which is said to contain some very strange and gloomy things," added the Jew, with a shudder.

Bathsheba, as well as her husband, gazed attentively on the seven luminous points, which diminished in brightness as the daylight gradually increased.

"As you say, Samuel, the mystery may be thus explained," resumed the Hebrew's wife. "Besides, the day is so important a one for the family of Rennepont that this apparition ought not to astonish us under the circumstances."

"Only to think," remarked Samuel, "that these lights have appeared at several different times throughout a century and a half! There must, therefore, be another family that, like ours, has devoted itself, from generation to generation, to accomplish a pious duty."

"But what is this duty? It will perhaps be explained to-day."

"Come, come, Bathsheba," suddenly exclaimed Samuel, as if roused from his reverie and reproaching himself with idleness; "this is the day, and before eight o'clock our cash account must be in order, and these titles to immense property arranged, so that they may be delivered to the rightful owners." And he pointed to the cedar-wood box.

"You are right, Samuel; this day does not belong to us. It is a solemn day—one that would have been sweet, oh! very sweet to you and me—if now any days could be sweet to us," said Bathsheba bitterly, for she was thinking of her son.

"Bathsheba," said Samuel mournfully, as he laid his hand on his wife's, "we shall at least have the stern satisfaction of having done our duty. And has not the Lord been very favorable to us, though he has thus severely tried us by the death of our son? Is it not thanks to his providence that three generations of my family have been able to commence, continue, and finish this great work?"

"Yes, Samuel," said the Jewess affectionately, "and for you at least this satisfaction will be combined with calm and quietness; for on the stroke of noon you will be delivered from a very terrible responsibility."

So saying, Bathsheba pointed to the box.

"It is true," replied the old man; "I had rather these immense riches were in the hands of those to whom they belong than in mine; but

to-day I shall cease to be their trustee. Once more, then, I will check the account for the last time, and compare the register with the cash-book that you hold in your hand."

Bathsheba bowed her head affirmatively, and Samuel, taking up his pen, occupied himself once more with his calculations. His wife, in spite of herself, again yielded to the sad thoughts that fatal date had awakened, by reminding her of the death of her son.

Let us now trace rapidly the history, in appearance so romantic and marvelous, in reality so simple, of the fifty thousand crowns, which, thanks to the law of accumulation, and to a prudent, intelligent, and faithful investment, had naturally and necessarily been transformed, in the space of a century and a half, into a sum far more important than the forty millions estimated by Father d'Aigrigny—who, partially informed on this subject, and reckoning the disastrous accidents, losses, and bankruptcies which might have occurred during so long a period, believed that forty millions might well be considered enormous.

The history of this fortune being closely connected with that of the Samuel family, by whom it had been managed for three generations, we shall give it again in a few words. About the period of 1670, some years before his death, Marius de Rennepont, then traveling in Portugal, had been enabled by means of powerful interest to save the life of an unfortunate Jew, condemned to be burnt alive by the Inquisition because of his religion. This Jew was *Isaac Samuel*, grandfather of the present guardian of the house in the Rue Saint François.

Generous men often attach themselves to those they have served, as much, at least, as the obliged parties are attached to their benefactors. Having ascertained that Isaac, who at that time carried on a petty broker's business at Lisbon, was industrious, honest, active, laborious, and intelligent, M. de Rennepont, who then possessed large property in France, proposed to the Jew to accompany him and undertake the management of his affairs. The same hatred and suspicion with which the Israelites have always been followed was then at its height. Isaac was therefore doubly grateful for this mark of confidence on the part of M. de Rennepont. He accepted the offer, and promised from that day to devote his existence to the service of him who had first saved his life and then trusted implicitly to his good faith and uprightness, although he was a Jew and belonged to a race generally suspected and despised. M. de Rennepont, a man of great soul, endowed with a good spirit, was not deceived in his choice. Until he was deprived of his fortune, it prospered wonderfully in the hands of Isaac Samuel, who, gifted with an admirable aptitude for business, applied himself exclusively to advance the interests of his benefactor.

Then came the persecution and ruin of M. de Rennepont, whose property was confiscated and given up to the reverend fathers of the Company of Jesus only a few days before his death. Concealed in the retreat he had chosen, therein to put a violent end to his life, he sent secretly for Isaac Samuel, and delivered to him fifty thousand crowns in gold, the last remains of his fortune. This faithful servant was to invest the money to the best advantage, and, if he should have a son, transmit to him the same obligation; or, should he have no child, he was to seek out some relation worthy of continuing this trust, to which would, moreover, be annexed a fair reward. It was thus to be transmitted and perpetuated from relative to relative until the expiration of a century and a half. M. de Rennepont also begged Isaac to take charge during his life of the house in the Rue Saint François, where he would be lodged gratis, and to leave this function likewise to his descendants, if it were possible.

If even Isaac Samuel had not had children, the powerful bond of union which exists between certain Jewish families would have rendered practicable the last will of De Rennepont. The relations of Isaac would have become partners in his gratitude to his benefactor, and they and their succeeding generations would have religiously accomplished the task imposed upon one of their race. But several years after the death of De Rennepont Isaac had a son. This son, Levy Samuel, born in 1689, not having had any children by his first wife, married again at nearly sixty years of age, and in 1750 he also had a son, David Samuel, the guardian of the house in the Rue Saint François, who, in 1832 (the date of this narrative), was eighty-two years old, and seemed likely to live as long as his father, who had died at the age of ninety-three. Finally, Abel Samuel, the son whom Bathsheba so bitterly regretted, born in 1790, had perished under the Russian knout at the age of thirty-six.

Having established this humble genealogy, we easily understand how this successive longevity of three members of the Samuel family, all of whom had been guardians of the walled house, by uniting, as it were, the nineteenth with the seventeenth century, simplified and facilitated the execution of M. de Rennepont's will; the latter having declared his desire to the grandfather of the Samuels that the capital should only be augmented by interest at five per cent.—so that the fortune might come to his descendants free from all taint of usurious speculation.

The co-religionists of the Samuel family, the first inventors of the bill of exchange, which served them in the middle ages to transport

mysteriously considerable amounts from one end of the world to the other, to conceal their fortune, and to shield it from the rapacity of their enemies—the Jews, we say, having almost the monopoly of the trade in money and exchanges until the end of the eighteenth century, aided the secret transactions and financial operations of this family, which, up to about 1820, placed their different securities, which had become progressively immense, in the hands of the principal Israelitish bankers and merchants of Europe. This sure and secret manner of acting had enabled the present guardian of the house in the Rue Saint François to effect enormous investments, unknown to all; and it was more especially during the period of his management that the capital sum had acquired, by the mere fact of compound interest, an almost incalculable development. Compared with him, his father and grandfather had only small amounts to manage. Though it had only been necessary to find successively sure and immediate investments, so that the money might not remain, as it were, one day without bearing interest, it had acquired financial capacity to attain this result, when so many millions were in question. The last of the Samuels, brought up in the school of his father, had exhibited this capacity in a very high degree, as will be seen immediately by the results. Nothing could be more touching, noble, and respectable than the conduct of the members of this Jewish family, who, partners in the engagement of gratitude taken by their ancestor, devoted themselves for long years with as much disinterestedness as intelligence and honesty to the slow acquisition of a kingly fortune, of which they expected no part themselves, but which, thanks to them, would come pure as immense to the hands of the descendants of their benefactor! Nor could anything be more honorable to him who made and him who received this deposit than the simple promise by word of mouth, unaccompanied by any security save mutual confidence and reciprocal esteem, when the result was only to be produced at the end of a century and a half!

.

After once more reading his inventory with attention, Samuel said to his wife: “I am certain of the correctness of my additions. Now please to compare with the account-book in your hand the summary of the investments that I have just entered in the register. I will assure myself, at the same time, that the bonds and vouchers are properly arranged in this casket, that, on the opening of the will, they may be delivered in order to the notary”

“Begin, my dear, and I will check you,” said Bathsheba.

Samuel read as follows, examining, as he went on, the contents of his casket :

Statement of the Account of the Heirs of M. DE RENNEPONT, delivered by DAVID SAMUEL.

DEBIT.		CREDIT.
2,000,000 francs per annum, in the French 5 P C., bought from 1825 to 1832, at an average price of 99f. 50c	39,800,000	150,000 francs received from M. de Rennepont, in 1682, by Isaac Samuel, my grandfather; and invested by him, my father, and myself in different securities, at five per cent. Interest, with a settlement of account and investment of interest every six months, producing, as by annexed vouchers.
900,000 francs, ditto, in the French 3 P C., bought during the same years, at an average of 74f. 25c.	22,275,000	225,950,000
5,000 shares in the Bank of France, bought at 1,900	9,500,000	
3,000 shares in the Four Canals in a certificate from the company, bought at 1,115f.	3,345,000	
125,000 ducats of Neapolitans, at an average of 82. 2,050,000 ducats, at 4f. 400.	9,020,000	
5,000 Austrian Metallics, of 1,000 florins, at 93—say 4,650,000 florins, at 2f. 50c	11,625,000	
75,000 pounds sterling per annum, English Consolidated 3 P C., at 88¼ — say £2,218,750, at 25f.	55,468,000	Less losses sustained by failures, expenses of commission and brokerage, and salary of three generations of trustees, as per statement annexed.
1,200,000 florins, Dutch 2½ P C., at 60 — 28,860,000 florins, at 2f. 100	60,606,000	
Cash in bank-notes, gold and silver	535,250	13,775,000
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Francs	212,175,000	212,175,000
	<hr/>	<hr/>
PARIS, 12th February, 1832.		Francs 212,175,000

"It is quite right," said Samuel, after examining the papers contained in the cedar-wood box. "There remains in hand, at the absolute disposal of the heirs of the Rennepont family, the sum of TWO HUNDRED AND TWELVE MILLIONS ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FIVE THOUSAND FRANCS." And the old man looked at his wife with an expression of legitimate pride.

"It is hardly credible!" cried Bathsheba, struck with surprise. "I knew that you had immense property in your hands, but I could never have believed that one hundred and fifty thousand francs, left a century and a half ago, should be the only source of this immense fortune."

"It is even so, Bathsheba," answered the old man proudly. "Doubtless my grandfather, my father, and myself have all been exact and faithful in the management of these funds; doubtless we have required



some sagacity in the choice of investments, in times of revolution and commercial panics; but all this was easy to us, thanks to our relations with our brethren in all countries, and never have I or any of mine

made an usurious investment, or even taken the full advantage of the legal rate of interest. Such were the positive demands of M. de Rennepont, given to my grandfather; nor is there in the world a fortune that has been obtained by purer means. Had it not been for disinterestedness we might have much augmented this two hundred and twelve millions, only by taking advantage of a few favorable circumstances."

"Dear me! is it possible?"

"Nothing is more simple, Bathsheba. Every one knows that in fourteen years a capital will be doubled by the mere accumulation of interest and compound interest at five per cent. Now, reflect that in a century and a half there are ten times fourteen years, and that these one hundred and fifty thousand francs have thus been doubled and redoubled, over and over again. All that astonishes you will then appear plain enough. In 1682 M. de Rennepont intrusted my grandfather with a hundred and fifty thousand francs; this sum, invested as I have told you, would have produced in 1696, fourteen years after, three hundred thousand francs. These last, doubled in 1710, would produce six hundred thousand. On the death of my grandfather in 1719, the amount was already near a million; in 1724 it would be twelve hundred thousand francs; in 1738, two millions four hundred thousand; in 1752, about two years after my birth, four millions eight hundred thousand; in 1766, nine millions six hundred thousand; in 1780, nineteen millions two hundred thousand; in 1794, twelve years after the death of my father, thirty-eight millions four hundred thousand; in 1808, seventy-six millions eight hundred thousand; in 1822, one hundred and fifty-three millions six hundred thousand; and, at this time, taking the compound interest for ten years, it should be at least two hundred and twenty-five millions. But losses and inevitable charges, of which the account has been strictly kept, have reduced the sum to two hundred and twelve millions one hundred and seventy-five thousand francs, the securities for which are in this box."

"I now understand you, my dear," answered Bathsheba thoughtfully; "but how wonderful is this power of accumulation! and what admirable provision may be made for the future, with the smallest present resources!"

"Such, no doubt, was the idea of M. de Rennepont; for my father has often told me, and he derived it from his father, that M. de Rennepont was one of the soundest intellects of his time," said Samuel, as he closed the cedar-wood box.

"God grant his descendants may be worthy of this kingly fortune, and make a noble use of it!" said Bathsheba, rising.

It was now broad day, and the clock had just struck seven.

"The masons will soon be here," said Samuel, as he replaced the cedar-wood box in the iron safe concealed behind the antique press. "Like you, Bathsheba, I am curious and anxious to know what descendants of M. de Rennepont will now present themselves."

Two or three loud knocks on the outer gate resounded through the house. The barking of the watch-dogs responded to this summons.

Samuel said to his wife: "It is no doubt the masons, whom the notary has sent with his clerk. Tie all the keys and their labels together; I will come back and fetch them."

So saying, Samuel went down to the door with much nimbleness, considering his age, prudently opened a small wicket, and saw three workmen in the garb of masons, accompanied by a young man dressed in black.

"What may you want, gentlemen?" said the Jew, before opening the door, as he wished first to make sure of the identity of the personages.

"I am sent by M. Dumesnil, the notary," answered the clerk, "to be present at the unwalling of a door. Here is a letter from my master, addressed to M. Samuel, guardian of the house."

"I am he, sir," said the Jew; "please to put the letter through the slide and I will take it."

The clerk did as Samuel desired, but shrugged his shoulders at what he considered the ridiculous precautions of a suspicious old man.

The housekeeper opened the box, took the letter, went to the end of the vaulted passage in order to read it, and carefully compared the signature with that of another letter which he drew from the pocket of his long coat; then, after all these precautions, he chained up his dogs and returned to open the gate to the clerk and masons.

"What the devil, my good man!" said the clerk, as he entered; "there would not be more formalities in opening the gates of a fortress!"

The Jew bowed, but without answering.

"Are you deaf, my good fellow?" cried the clerk, close to his ears.

"No, sir," said Samuel, with a quiet smile, as he advanced several steps beyond the passage. Then pointing to the old house, he added: "That, sir, is the door which you will have to open; you will also have to remove the lead and iron from the second window to the right."

"Why not open all the windows?" asked the clerk.

"Because, sir, as guardian of this house, I have received particular orders on the subject."

"Who gave you these orders?"

"My father, sir, who received them from his father, who transmitted them from the master of this house. When I cease to have the care of it, the new proprietor will do as he pleases."

“ Oh ! very well,” said the clerk, not a little surprised. Then, addressing himself to the masons, he added :

“ This is your business, my fine fellows ; you are to unwall the door, and remove the iron frame-work of the second window to the right.”

While the masons set to work, under the inspection of the notary’s clerk, a coach stopped before the outer gate, and Rodin, accompanied by Gabriel, entered the house in the Rue Saint François.

CHAPTER III

THE HEIR



AMUEL opened the door to Gabriel and Rodin.

The latter said to the Jew: "You, sir, are the keeper of this house?"

"Yes, sir," replied Samuel.

"This is Abbé Gabriel de Rennepont," said Rodin, as he introduced his companion, "one of the descendants of the family of the Renneponts."

"Happy to hear it, sir," said the Jew, almost involuntarily, struck with the angelic countenance of Gabriel; for nobleness and serenity of soul were visible in the glance of the young priest, and were written upon his pure, white brow, already crowned with the halo of martyrdom.

Samuel looked at Gabriel with curiosity and benevolent interest; but feeling that this silent contemplation must cause some embarrassment to his guest, he said to him: "M. Abbé, the notary will not be here before ten o'clock."

Gabriel looked at him in turn, with an air of surprise, and answered: "What notary, sir?"

"Father d'Aigrigny will explain all this to you," said Rodin hastily. Then addressing Samuel, he added: "We are a little before the time. Will you allow us to wait for the arrival of the notary?"

"Certainly," said Samuel, "if you please to walk into my house."

"I thank you, sir," answered Rodin, "and accept your offer."

"Follow me, then, gentlemen," said the old man.

A few moments after, the young priest and the *Socius*, preceded by Samuel, entered one of the rooms occupied by the latter, on the ground-floor of the building, looking out upon the court-yard.

"The Abbé d'Aigrigny, who has been the guardian of M. Gabriel, will soon be coming to ask for us," added Rodin; "will you have the kindness, sir, to show him into this room?"

"I will not fail to do so, sir," said Samuel as he went out.

The *Socius* and Gabriel were left alone.

To the adorable gentleness which usually gave to the fine features of the missionary so touching a charm, there had succeeded in this moment a remarkable expression of sadness, resolution, and severity. Rodin, not having seen Gabriel for some days, was greatly struck by the change he remarked in him. He had watched him silently all the way from the Rue des Postes to the Rue Saint François. The young priest wore, as usual, a long black cassock, which made still more visible the transparent paleness of his countenance. When the Jew had left the room, Gabriel said to Rodin, in a firm voice :

“Will you at length inform me, sir, why, for some days past, I have been prevented from speaking to his reverence Father d’Aigrigny? Why has he chosen this house to grant me an interview?”

“It is impossible for me to answer these questions,” replied Rodin coldly. “His reverence will soon arrive, and will listen to you. All I can tell you is, that the reverend father lays as much stress upon this meeting as you do. If he has chosen this house for the interview, it is because you have an interest to be here. You know it well—though you affected astonishment on hearing the guardian speak of a notary”

So saying, Rodin fixed a scrutinizing, anxious look upon Gabriel, whose countenance expressed only surprise.

“I do not understand you,” said he, in reply to Rodin. “What have I to do with this house?”

“It is impossible that you should not know it,” answered Rodin, still looking at him with attention.

“I have told you, sir, that I do not know it,” replied the other, almost offended by the pertinacity of the *Socius*.

“What, then, did your adopted mother come to tell you yesterday? Why did you presume to receive her without permission from Father d’Aigrigny, as I have heard this morning? Did she not speak with you of certain family papers, found upon you when she took you in?”

“No, sir,” said Gabriel; “those papers were delivered at the time to my adopted mother’s confessor, and they afterward passed into Father d’Aigrigny’s hands. This is the first I hear for a long time of these papers.”

“So you affirm that Françoise Baudoin did not come to speak to you on this subject?” resumed Rodin obstinately, laying great emphasis on his words.

“This is the second time, sir, that you seem to doubt my affirmation,” said the young priest mildly, while he repressed a movement of impatience; “I assure you that I speak the truth.”

“He knows nothing,” thought Rodin; for he was too well convinced of Gabriel’s sincerity to retain the least doubt after so positive a declara-

tion. "I believe you," he went on. "The idea only occurred to me in reflecting what could be the reason of sufficient weight to induce you to transgress Father d'Aigrigny's orders with regard to the absolute retirement he had commanded, which was to exclude all communication with those without. Much more, contrary to all the rules of our house, you ventured to shut the door of your room, whereas it ought to remain half open, that the mutual inspection enjoined us might be more easily practiced. I could only explain these sins against discipline by the necessity of some very important conversation with your adopted mother."

"It was to a priest, and not to her adopted son, that Madame Baudoin wished to speak," replied Gabriel, in a tone of deep seriousness. "I closed my door because I was to hear a confession."

"And what had Françoise Baudoin of such importance to confess?"

"You will know that by and by, when I speak to his reverence—if it be his pleasure that you should hear me."

These words were so firmly spoken that a long silence ensued.

Let us remind the reader that Gabriel had hitherto been kept by his superiors in the most complete ignorance of the importance of the family interests which required his presence in the Rue Saint François. The day before, Françoise Baudoin, absorbed in her own grief, had forgotten to tell him that the two orphans also should be present at this meeting, and had she even thought of it, Dagobert would have prevented her mentioning the circumstance to the young priest.

Gabriel was therefore quite ignorant of the family ties which united him with the daughters of Marshal Simon, with Mademoiselle de Cardoville, with M. Hardy, Prince Djalma, and Sleepinbuff. In a word, if it had then been revealed to him that he was the heir of Marius de Renepont, he would have believed himself the only descendant of the family.

During the moment's silence which succeeded his conversation with Rodin, Gabriel observed through the windows the masons at their work of unwalling the door. Having finished this first operation, they set about removing the bars of iron by which a plate of lead was fixed over the same entrance.

At this juncture Father d'Aigrigny, conducted by Samuel, entered the room. Before Gabriel could turn round, Rodin had time to whisper to the reverend father:

"He knows nothing, and we have no longer anything to fear from the Indian."

Notwithstanding his affected calmness, Father d'Aigrigny's countenance was pale and contracted, like that of a player who is about to

stake all on a last, decisive game. Hitherto, all had favored the designs of the society; but he could not think without alarm of the four hours which still remained before they should reach the fatal moment.

Gabriel having turned toward him, Father d'Aigrigny offered him his hand with a smile, and said to him in an affectionate and cordial tone:

"My dear son, it has pained me a good deal to have been obliged to refuse you till now the interview that you so much desired. It has been no less distressing to me to impose on you a confinement of some days. Though I cannot give any explanation of what I may think fit to order, I will just observe to you that I have acted only for your interest."

"I am bound to believe your reverence," answered Gabriel, bowing his head.

In spite of himself the young priest felt a vague sense of fear, for until his departure for his American mission, Father d'Aigrigny, at whose feet he had pronounced the formidable vows which bound him irrevocably to the Society of Jesus, had exercised over him that frightful species of influence which, acting only by despotism, suppression, and intimidation, breaks down all the living forces of the soul and leaves it inert, trembling, and terrified.

Impressions of early youth are indelible, and this was the first time since his return from America that Gabriel found himself in presence of Father d'Aigrigny; and although he did not shrink from the resolution he had taken, he regretted not to have been able, as he had hoped, to gather new strength and courage from an interview with Agricola and Dagobert. Father d'Aigrigny knew mankind too well not to have remarked the emotion of the young priest, and to have endeavored to explain its cause. This emotion appeared to him a favorable omen; he redoubled, therefore, his seductive arts, his air of tenderness and amenity, reserving to himself, if necessary, the choice of assuming another mask. He sat down, while Gabriel and Rodin remained standing in a respectful position, and said to the former:

"You desire, my dear son, to have an important interview with me?"

"Yes, father," said Gabriel, involuntarily casting down his eyes before the large, glittering gray pupil of his superior.

"And I also have matters of great importance to communicate to you. Listen to me first; you can speak afterward."

"I listen, father."

"It is about twelve years ago, my dear son," said Father d'Aigrigny affectionately, "that the confessor of your adopted mother, addressing himself to me through M. Rodin, called my attention to you by report-

ing the astonishing progress you had made at the school of the Brothers. I soon found, indeed, that your excellent conduct, your gentle, modest character, and your precocious intelligence were worthy of the most tender interest. From that moment I kept my eyes upon you, and, at the end of some time, seeing that you still progressed, it appeared to me that there was something more in you than the stuff out of which a mere workman is made. We agreed with your adopted mother, and through my intervention you were admitted gratuitously to one of the schools of our Company. Thus one burden the less weighed upon the excellent woman who had taken charge of you, and you received from our paternal care all the benefits of a religious education. Is not this true, my dear son ?”

“It is true, father,” answered Gabriel, casting down his eyes.

“As you grew up, excellent and rare virtues displayed themselves in your character. Your obedience and mildness were, above all, exemplary. You made rapid progress in your studies. I knew not then to what career you wished to devote yourself, but I felt certain that, in every station of life, you would remain a faithful son of the Church. I was not deceived in my hopes, or rather, my dear son, you surpassed them all. Learning, by a friendly communication, that your adopted mother ardently desired to see you take orders, you acceded generously and religiously to the wish of the excellent woman to whom you owed so much. But as the lord is always just in his recompenses, he willed that the most touching work of gratitude you could show to your adopted mother should at the same time be divinely profitable, by making you one the militant members of our holy Church.”

At these words Gabriel could not repress a significant start, as he remembered the sad confidences of Françoise. But he restrained himself, while Rodin stood leaning with his elbows on the corner of the chimney-piece, continuing to examine him with singular and obstinate attention.

Father d'Aigrigny resumed :

“I do not conceal from you, my dear son, that your resolution filled me with joy. I saw in you one of the future lights of the Church, and I was anxious to see it shine in the midst of our Company. You submitted courageously to our painful and difficult tests ; you were judged worthy of belonging to us, and, after taking in my presence the irrevocable and sacred oath, which binds you forever to our Company for the greater glory of God, you answered the appeal of our Holy Father to willing souls, and offered yourself as a missionary, to preach to savages the one Catholic faith. Though it was painful to us to part with our dear son, we could not refuse to accede to such pious wishes. You set

out a humble missionary—you return a glorious martyr—and we are justly proud to reckon you amongst our number. This rapid sketch of the past was necessary, my dear son, to arrive at what follows; for we wish now, if it be possible, to draw still closer the bonds that unite us. Listen to me, my dear son; what I am about to say is confidential, and of the highest importance, not only for you, but the whole Company.”

“Then, father,” cried Gabriel hastily, interrupting the Abbé d’Aigrigny, “I cannot—I ought not to hear you.”

The young priest became deadly pale; it was clear by the alteration of his features that a violent struggle was taking place within him, but recovering his first resolution, he raised his head, and casting an assured look on Father d’Aigrigny and Rodin, who glanced at each other in mute surprise, he resumed:

“I repeat to you, father, that if it concerns confidential matters of the Company, I must not hear you.”

“Really, my dear son, you occasion me the greatest astonishment. What is the matter? Your countenance changes; your emotion is visible. Speak without fear; why can you not hear me?”

“I cannot tell you, father, until I also have, in my turn, rapidly sketched the past—such as I have learned to judge it of late. You will then understand, father, that I am no longer entitled to your confidence, for an abyss will doubtlessly soon separate us.”

At these words it is impossible to paint the look rapidly exchanged between Rodin and Father d’Aigrigny. The *Socius* began to bite his nails, fixing his reptile eye angrily upon Gabriel; Father d’Aigrigny grew livid, and his brow was bathed in cold sweat. He asked himself with terror if, at the moment of reaching the goal, the obstacle was going to come from Gabriel, in favor of whom all other obstacles had been removed. This thought filled him with despair. Yet the reverend father contained himself admirably, remained calm, and answered with affectionate unction:

“It is impossible to believe, my dear son, that you and I can ever be separated by an abyss, unless by the abyss of grief, which would be caused by any serious danger to your salvation. But speak; I listen to you.”

“It is true, that, twelve years ago, father,” proceeded Gabriel, in a firm voice, growing more animated as he proceeded, “I entered, through your intervention, a college of the Company of Jesus. I entered it loving, truthful, confiding. How did they encourage those precious instincts of childhood? I will tell you. The day of my entrance the superior said to me, as he pointed out two children a little older than myself: ‘These are the companions that you will prefer. You will always walk

three together, the rules of the house forbid all intercourse between two persons only. They also require that you should listen attentively to what your companions say, so that you may report it to me; for



these dear children may have, without knowing it, bad thoughts or evil projects. Now, if you love your comrades, you must inform me of these evil tendencies, that my paternal remonstrances may save them from punishment; it is better to prevent evil than to punish it ——”

"Such are, indeed, my dear son," said Father d'Aigrigny, "the rules of our house, and the language we hold to all our pupils on their entrance."

"I know it, father," answered Gabriel bitterly; "three days after, a poor, submissive, and credulous child, I was already a spy upon my comrades, hearing and remembering their conversation and reporting it to the superior, who congratulated me on my zeal. What they thus made me do was shameful; and yet, God knows! I thought I was accomplishing a charitable duty. I was happy in obeying the commands of a superior whom I respected, and to whose words I listened, in my childish faith, as I should have listened to those of Heaven. One day that I had broken some rule of the house, the superior said to me: 'My child, you have deserved a severe punishment; but you will be pardoned if you succeed in surprising one of your comrades in the same fault that you have committed.' And for fear that, notwithstanding my faith and blind obedience, this encouragement to turn informer from the motive of personal interest might appear odious to me, the superior added: 'I speak to you, my child, for the sake of your comrade's salvation. Were he to escape punishment, his evil habits would become habitual. But by detecting him in a fault and exposing him to salutary influence, you will have the double advantage of aiding in his salvation and escaping yourself a merited punishment, which will have been remitted because of your zeal for your neighbor ——'"

"Doubtless," answered Father d'Aigrigny, more and more terrified by Gabriel's language; "and in truth, my dear son, all this is conformable to the rule followed in our colleges, and to the habits of the members of our Company, *'who may denounce each other without prejudice to mutual love and charity, and only for their greater spiritual advancement, particularly when questioned by their superior, or commanded for the Greater Glory of God,'* as our Constitution has it."

"I know it," cried Gabriel; "I know it. 'Tis in the name of all that is most sacred amongst men that we are encouraged to do evil."

"My dear son," said Father d'Aigrigny, trying to conceal his secret and growing terror beneath an appearance of wounded dignity, "from you to me, these words are at least strange."

At this, Rodin, quitting the mantel-piece, on which he had been leaning, began to walk up and down the room, with a meditative air and without ceasing to bite his nails.

"It is cruel to be obliged to remind you, my dear son, that you are indebted to us for the education you have received," added Father d'Aigrigny

"Such were its fruits, father," replied Gabriel. "Until then I had been a spy on the other children, from a sort of disinterestedness; but the orders of the superior made me advance another step on that shameful road. I had become an informer, to escape a merited punishment. And yet, such was my faith, my humility, my confidence, that I performed with innocence and candor this doubly odious part. Once indeed, tormented by vague scruples, the last remains of generous aspirations that they were stifling within me, I asked myself if the charitable and religious end could justify the means, and I communicated my doubts to the superior. He replied that I had not to judge, but to obey, and that to him alone belonged the responsibility of my acts."

"Go on, my dear son," said Father d'Aigrigny, yielding, in spite of himself, to the deepest dejection. "Alas! I was right in opposing your travel to America."

"And yet it was the will of Providence, in that new, productive, and free country, that, enlightened by a singular chance, on past and present, my eyes were at length opened. Yes!" cried Gabriel, "it was in America that, released from the gloomy abode where I had spent so many years of my youth, and finding myself for the first time face to face with the divine majesty of Nature, in the heart of immense solitudes through which I journeyed—it was there that, overcome by so much magnificence and grandeur, I made a vow ——"

Here Gabriel interrupted himself, to continue:

"Presently, father, I will explain to you that vow; but believe me," added the missionary, with an accent of deep sorrow, "it was a fatal day to me when I first learned to fear and condemn all that I had hitherto most revered and blessed. Oh! I assure you, father," added Gabriel, with moist eyes, "it was not for myself alone that I then wept."

"I know the goodness of your heart, my dear son," replied Father d'Aigrigny, catching a glimpse of hope on seeing Gabriel's emotion; "I fear that you have been led astray. But trust yourself to us, as to your spiritual fathers, and I doubt not we shall confirm your faith, so unfortunately shaken, and disperse the darkness which at present obscures your sight. Alas, my dear son, in your vain illusions you have mistaken some false glimmer for the pure light of day. But go on!"

While Father d'Aigrigny was thus speaking, Rodin stopped, took a pocket-book from his coat, and wrote down several notes.

Gabriel was becoming more and more pale and agitated. It required no small courage in him to speak as he was speaking, for since his journey to America he had learned to estimate the formidable power of the Company. But this revelation of the past, looked at from the vantage-

ground of a more enlightened present, was for the young priest the excuse or rather the cause of the determination he had just signified to his superior, and he wished to explain all faithfully, notwithstanding the danger he knowingly encountered. He continued, therefore, in an agitated voice :

“ You know, father, that the last days of my childhood, that happy age of frankness and innocent joy, were spent in an atmosphere of terror, suspicion, and restraint. Alas ! how could I resign myself to the least impulse of confiding trust, when I was recommended to shun the looks of him who spoke with me, in order to hide the impression that his words might cause ; to conceal whatever I felt and to observe and listen to everything ? Thus I reached the age of fifteen ; by degrees the rare visits I was allowed to pay, but always in presence of one of our fathers, to my adopted mother and brother, were quite suppressed, so as to shut my heart against all soft and tender emotions. Sad and fearful in that large, old, noiseless, gloomy house, I felt that I became more and more isolated from the affections and the freedom of the world. My time was divided between mutilated studies, without connection and without object, and long hours of minute devotional exercises. I ask you, father, did they ever seek to warm our young souls by words of tenderness or evangelic love ? Alas, no ! For the words of the divine Saviour, ‘ Love ye one another,’ they had substituted the command, ‘ Suspect ye one another.’ Did they ever, father, speak to us of our country or of liberty ? No ! ah, no ! for those words make the heart beat high ; and with them the heart must not beat at all. To our long hours of study and devotion there only succeeded a few walks, three by three—never two and two—because by threes the spy-system is more practicable, and because intimacies are more easily formed by two alone ; and thus might have arisen some of those generous friendships, which also make the heart beat more than it should. And so, by the habitual repression of every feeling, there came a time when I could not feel at all. For six months I had not seen my adopted mother and brother ; they came to visit me at the college ; a few years before I should have received them with transports and tears ; this time my eyes were dry, my heart was cold. My mother and brother quitted me weeping. The sight of this grief struck me, and I became conscious of the icy insensibility which had been creeping upon me since I inhabited this tomb. Frightened at myself, I wished to leave it while I had still strength to do so. Then, father, I spoke to you of the choice of a profession : for sometimes in waking moments I seemed to catch from afar the sound of an active and useful life, laborious and free, surrounded by family affections. Oh ! then I felt the want of movement and lib-

erty, of noble and warm emotions; of that life of the soul, which fled before me. I told it you, father, on my knees, bathing your hands with my tears. The life of a workman or a soldier—anything would have suited me. It was then you informed me that my adopted mother, to whom I owed my life—for she had taken me in, dying of want, and, poor herself, had shared with me the scanty bread of her child; admirable sacrifice for a mother!—that she,” continued Gabriel, hesitating and casting down his eyes, for noble natures blush for the guilt of others, and are ashamed of the infamies of which they are themselves victims, “that she, my adopted mother, had but one wish, one desire ——”

“That of seeing you take orders, my dear son,” replied Father d’Aigrigny; “for this pious and perfect creature hoped that in securing your salvation she would provide for her own; but she did not venture to inform you of this thought for fear you might ascribe it to an interested motive.”

“Enough, father!” said Gabriel, interrupting the Abbé d’Aigrigny, with a movement of involuntary indignation; “it is painful for me to hear you assert an error. Françoise Baudoin never had such a thought.”

“My dear son, you are too hasty in your judgments,” replied Father d’Aigrigny mildly “I tell you that such was the one sole thought of your adopted mother.”

“Yesterday, father, she told me all. She and I were equally deceived.”

“Then, my dear son,” said Father d’Aigrigny sternly, “you take the word of your adopted mother before mine?”

“Spare me an answer painful for both of us, father,” said Gabriel, casting down his eyes.

“Will you now tell me,” resumed Father d’Aigrigny, with anxiety, “what you mean to ——”

The reverend father was unable to finish. Samuel entered the room, and said:

“A rather old man wishes to speak to M. Rodin.”

“That is my name, sir,” answered the *Socius*, in surprise; “I am much obliged to you.” But, before following the Jew, he gave to Father d’Aigrigny a few words written with a pencil upon one of the leaves of his pocket-book.

Rodin went out in very uneasy mood to learn who could have come to seek him in the Rue Saint François. Father d’Aigrigny and Gabriel were left alone together.

CHAPTER IV

THE RUPTURE

PLUNGED into a state of mortal anxiety, Father d'Aigrigny had taken mechanically the note written by Rodin, and held it in his hand without thinking of opening it. The reverend father asked himself in alarm what conclusion Gabriel would draw from these references to the past; and he durst not make any answer to his reproaches for fear of irritating the young priest, upon whose head such immense interests now reposed.

Gabriel could possess nothing for himself, according to the constitutions of the Society of Jesus. Moreover, the reverend father had obtained from him, in favor of the Order, an express renunciation of all property that might ever come to him. But the commencement of this conversation seemed to announce so serious a change in Gabriel's views with regard to the Company that he might choose to break through the ties which attached him to it; and in that case he would not be legally bound to fulfill any of his engagements. The donation would thus be canceled *de facto*, just at the moment of being so marvelously realized by the possession of the immense fortune of the Rennepont family, and D'Aigrigny's hopes would thus be completely and forever frustrated.

Of all the perplexities which the reverend father had experienced for some time past with regard to this inheritance, none had been more unexpected and terrible than this. Fearing to interrupt or question Gabriel, Father d'Aigrigny waited in mute terror the end of this interview, which already bore so threatening an aspect.

The missionary resumed :

"It is my duty, father, to continue this sketch of my past life, until the moment of my departure for America. You will understand, presently, why I have imposed on myself this obligation."

Father d'Aigrigny nodded for him to proceed.

"Once informed of the pretended wishes of my adopted mother, I resigned myself to them, though at some cost of feeling. I left the

gloomy abode, in which I had passed my childhood and part of my youth, to enter one of the seminaries of the Company. My resolution was not caused by an irresistible religious vocation, but by a wish to discharge the sacred debt I owed my adopted mother. Yet the true spirit of the religion of Christ is so vivifying, that I felt myself animated and warmed by the idea of carrying out the adorable precepts of our Blessed Saviour. To my imagination, a seminary, instead of resembling the college where I had lived in painful restraint, appeared like a holy place, where all that was pure and warm in the fraternity of the Gospel would be applied to common life — where, for example, the lessons most frequently taught would be the ardent love of humanity, and the ineffable sweets of commiseration and tolerance, where the everlasting words of Christ would be interpreted in their broadest sense, and where, in fine, by the habitual exercise and expansion of the most generous sentiments, men were prepared for the magnificent apostolic mission of making the rich and happy sympathize with the sufferings of their brethren, by unveiling the frightful miseries of humanity — a sublime and sacred morality, which none are able to withstand, when it is preached with eyes full of tears and hearts overflowing with tenderness and charity!"

As he delivered these last words with profound emotion, Gabriel's eyes became moist, and his countenance shone with angelic beauty.

"Such is indeed, my dear son, the spirit of Christianity; but one must also study and explain the letter," answered Father d'Aigrigny coldly. "It is to this study that the seminaries of our Company are specially destined. Now the interpretation of the letter is a work of analysis, discipline, and submission — and not one of heart and sentiment."

"I perceived that only too well, father. On entering this new house, I found, alas! all my hopes defeated. Dilating for a moment, my heart soon sunk within me. Instead of this center of life, affection, youth, of which I had dreamed, I found, in the silent and ice-cold seminary, the same suppression of every generous emotion, the same inexorable discipline, the same system of mutual prying, the same suspicion, the same invincible obstacles to all ties of friendship. The ardor which had warmed my soul for an instant soon died out; little by little, I fell back into the habits of a stagnant, passive, mechanical life, governed by a pitiless power with mechanical precision, just like the inanimate works of a watch."

"But order, submission, and regularity are the first foundations of our Company, my dear son."

"Alas, father! it was death, not life, that I found thus organized. In the midst of this destruction of every generous principle, I devoted

myself to scholastic and theological studies — gloomy studies — a wily, menacing, and hostile science which, always awake to ideas of peril, contest, and war, is opposed to all those of peace, progress, and liberty.”

“Theology, my dear son,” said Father d’Aigrigny sternly, “is at once a buckler and a sword,—a buckler, to protect and cover the Catholic faith; a sword, to attack and combat heresy.”

“And yet, father, Christ and his apostles knew not this subtle science; though their simple and touching words regenerated mankind and gave freedom to slavery. Does not the divine code of the Gospel suffice to teach men to love one another? But, alas! far from speaking to us this language, our attention was too often occupied with wars of religion, and the rivers of blood that had flowed in honor of the Lord and for the destruction of heresy. These terrible lessons made our life still more melancholy. As we grew near to manhood, our relations at the seminary assumed a growing character of bitterness, jealousy, and suspicion. The habit of tale-bearing against each other, applied to more serious subjects, engendered silent hate and profound resentments. I was neither better nor worse than the others. All of us, bowed down for years beneath the iron yoke of passive obedience, unaccustomed to reflection or free will, humble and trembling before our superiors, had the same pale, dull, colorless disposition. At last I took orders; once a priest, you invited me, father, to enter the Company of Jesus, or rather, I found myself insensibly brought to this determination. How, I do not know. For a long time before, my will was not my own. I went through all my proofs: the most terrible was decisive; for some months I lived in the silence of my cell, practicing with resignation the strange and mechanical exercises that you ordered me. With the exception of your reverence, nobody approached me during that long space of time; no human voice but yours sounded in my ear. Sometimes, in the night, I felt vague terrors; my mind, weakened by fasting, austerity, and solitude, was impressed with frightful visions. At other times, on the contrary, I felt a sort of quiescence, in the idea that, having once pronounced my vows, I should be delivered forever from the burden of thought and will. Then I abandoned myself to an insurmountable torpor, like those unfortunate wretches who, surprised by a snow-storm, yield to a suicidal repose. Thus I awaited the fatal moment. At last, according to the rule of discipline, *with the death-rattle in my throat*, I hastened the moment of accomplishing the final act of my expiring will — the vow to renounce my will forever.”

“Remember, my dear son,” replied Father d’Aigrigny, pale and tortured by increasing anguish, “remember, that, on the eve of the day fixed for the completion of your vows, I offered, according to the rule



THE JUSTIFICATION OF REGICIDE.

of our Company, to absolve you from joining us—leaving you completely free, for we accept none but voluntary vocations.”

“It is true, father,” answered Gabriel, with sorrowful bitterness, “when, worn out and broken by three months of solitude and trial, I was completely exhausted, and unable to move a step, you opened the door of my cell and said to me: ‘If you like, rise and walk; you are free!’ Alas! I had no more strength. The only desire of my soul, inert and paralyzed for so long a period, was the repose of the grave; and, pronouncing those irrevocable vows, I fell, *like a corpse*, into your hands.”

“And till now, my dear son, you have never failed in this corpse-like obedience,—to use the expression of our glorious founder,—because, the more absolute this obedience, the more meritorious it must be.”

After a moment's silence, Gabriel resumed:

“You had always concealed from me, father, the true ends of the society into which I entered. I was asked to abandon my free will to my superiors, for the greater glory of God. My vows once pronounced, I was to be in your hands a docile and obedient instrument; but I was to be employed, you told me, in a holy, great, and beauteous work. I believed you, father: how should I not have believed you? But a fatal event changed my destiny—a painful malady caused by——”

“My son,” cried Father d'Aigrigny, interrupting Gabriel, “it is useless to recall these circumstances.”

“Pardon me, father, I must recall them. I have the right to be heard. I cannot pass over in silence any of the facts which have led me to take the immutable resolution that I am about to announce to you.”

“Speak on, my son,” said Father d'Aigrigny, frowning; for he was much alarmed at the words of the young priest, whose cheeks, until now pale, were covered with a deep blush.

“Six months before my departure for America,” resumed Gabriel, casting down his eyes, “you informed me that I was destined to confess penitents; and, to prepare me for that sacred ministry, you gave me a book.”

Gabriel again hesitated. His blushes increased. Father d'Aigrigny could scarcely restrain a start of impatience and anger.

“You gave me a book,” resumed the young priest, with a great effort to control himself, “a book containing questions to be addressed by a confessor to youths and young girls and married women when they present themselves at the tribunal of penance. My God!” added Gabriel, shuddering at the remembrance; “I shall never forget that awful moment. It was night. I had retired to my chamber, taking with me this book, composed, you told me, by one of our fathers and com-

pleted by a holy bishop. Full of respect, faith, and confidence, I opened those pages. At first I did not understand them; afterward I understood, and then I was seized with shame and horror, struck with stupor, and had hardly strength to close, with trembling hand, this abominable volume. I ran to you, father, to accuse myself of having involuntarily cast my eyes on those nameless pages, which by mistake you had placed in my hands."

"Remember also, my dear son," said Father d'Aigrigny gravely, "that I calmed your scruples, and told you that a priest, who is bound to *hear* everything under the seal of confession, must be able to *know* and appreciate everything; and that our Company imposes the task of reading this *Compendium*, as a classical work, upon young deacons, seminarists, and priests who are destined to be confessors."

"I believed you, father. In me the habit of inert obedience was so powerful and I was so unaccustomed to independent reflection that, notwithstanding my horror (with which I now reproached myself as with a crime), I took the volume back into my chamber and read. Oh, father! what a dreadful revelation of criminal fancies, guilty of guiltiest in their refinement!"

"You speak of this book in blamable terms," said Father d'Aigrigny severely; "you were the victim of a too lively imagination. It is to it that you must attribute this fatal impression, and not to an excellent work, irreproachable for its special purpose, and duly authorized by the Church. You are not able to judge of such a production."

"I will speak of it no more, father," said Gabriel; and he thus resumed: "A long illness followed that terrible night. Many times they feared for my reason. When I recovered, the past appeared to me like a painful dream. You told me then, father, that I was not yet ripe for certain functions; and it was then that I earnestly entreated you to be allowed to go on the American missions. After having long refused my prayer, you at length consented. From my childhood I had always lived in the college or seminary, in a state of continual restraint and subjection. By constantly holding down my head and eyes, I had lost the habit of contemplating the heavens and the splendors of nature. But, oh! what deep religious happiness I felt when I found myself suddenly transported to the center of the imposing grandeur of the seas, half-way between the ocean and the sky; I seemed to come forth from a place of thick darkness; for the first time for many years I felt my heart beat freely in my bosom; for the first time I felt myself master of my own thoughts, and ventured to examine my past life, as from the summit of a mountain one looks down into a gloomy vale. Then strange doubts rose within me. I asked myself by what right and for

what end any being had so long repressed, almost annihilated, the exercise of my will, of my liberty, of my reason, since God had endowed me with these gifts. But I said to myself that perhaps one day the great, beauteous, and holy work, in which I was to have my share, would be revealed to me, and would recompense me for my obedience and resignation."

At this moment Rodin reëntered the room. Father d'Aigrigny questioned him with a significant look. The *Socius* approached, and said to him in a low voice, so that Gabriel could not hear:

"Nothing serious. It was only to inform me that Marshal Simon's father is arrived at M. Hardy's factory."

Then, glancing at Gabriel, Rodin appeared to interrogate Father d'Aigrigny, who hung his head with a desponding air. Yet he resumed, again addressing Gabriel, while Rodin took his old place, with his elbow on the chimney-piece:

"Go on, my dear son. I am anxious to learn what resolution you have adopted."

"I will tell you in a moment, father. I arrived at Charleston. The superior of our establishment in that place, to whom I imparted my doubts as to the objects of our society, took upon himself to clear them up, and unveiled it all to me with alarming frankness. He told me the tendency—not perhaps of all the members of the Company, for a great number must have shared my ignorance, but the objects which our leaders have pertinaciously kept in view ever since the foundation of the Order. I was terrified. I read the casuists. Oh, father! that was a new and dreadful revelation, when, at every page, I read the excuse and justification of robbery, slander, adultery, perjury, murder, regicide. When I considered that I, a priest of a God of charity, justice, pardon, and love, was to belong henceforth to a Company whose chiefs professed and gloried in such doctrines, I made a solemn oath to break forever the ties which bound me to it."

On these words of Gabriel, Father d'Aigrigny and Rodin exchanged a look of terror. All was lost; their prey had escaped them.

Deeply moved by the remembrances he recalled, Gabriel did not perceive the action of the reverend father and the *Socius*, and thus continued:

"In spite of my resolution, father, to quit the Company, the discovery I had made was very painful to me. Oh! believe me, for the honest and loving soul nothing is more frightful than to have to renounce what it has long respected! I suffered so much that, when I thought of the dangers of my mission, I hoped with a secret joy that God would perhaps take me to himself under these circumstances; but, on the contrary, he watched over me with providential solicitude."

As he said this, Gabriel felt a thrill, for he remembered a mysterious woman who had saved his life in America. After a moment's silence, he resumed: "My mission terminated, I returned hither to beg, father, that you would release me from my vows. Many times, but in vain, I solicited an interview. Yesterday it pleased Providence that I should have a long conversation with my adopted mother; from her I learned the trick by which my vocation had been forced upon me, and the sacrilegious abuse of the confessional by which she had been induced to intrust to other persons the orphans that a dying mother had confided to the care of an honest soldier. You understand, father, that, if even I had before hesitated to break these bonds, what I heard yesterday must have rendered my decision irrevocable. But at this solemn moment, father, I am bound to tell you that I do not accuse the whole society; many simple, credulous, and confiding men like myself must, no doubt, form part of it. Docile instruments, they see not in their blindness the work to which they are destined. I pity them, and pray God to enlighten them as he has enlightened me."

"So, my son," said Father d'Aigrigny, rising with livid and despairing look, "you come to ask of me to break the ties which attach you to the society?"

"Yes, father; you received my vows—it is for you to release me from them."

"So, my son, you understand that engagements once freely taken by you are now to be considered as null and void?"

"Yes, father."

"So, my son, there is to be henceforth nothing in common between you and our Company?"

"No, father—since I request you to absolve me of my vows."

"But, you know, my son, that the society may release you—but that you cannot release yourself."

"The step I take proves to you, father, the importance I attach to an oath, since I come to you to release me from it. Nevertheless, were you to refuse me, I should not think myself bound in the eyes of God or man."

"It is perfectly clear," said Father d'Aigrigny to Rodin, his voice expiring upon his lips, so deep was his despair.

Suddenly, while Gabriel, with downcast eyes, waited for the answer of Father d'Aigrigny, who remained mute and motionless, Rodin appeared struck with a new idea, on perceiving that the reverend father still held in his hand the note written in pencil. The *Socius* hastily approached Father d'Aigrigny, and said to him in a whisper, with a look of doubt and alarm: "Have you not read my note?"

"I did not think of it," answer the reverend father mechanically.

Rodin appeared to make a great effort to repress a movement of violent rage. Then he said to Father d'Aigrigny, in a calm voice: "Read it now."

Hardly had the reverend father cast his eyes upon this note than a sudden ray of hope illuminated his hitherto despairing countenance. Pressing the hand of the *Socius* with an expression of deep gratitude, he said to him in a low voice:

"You are right; Gabriel is ours."

CHAPTER V

THE CHANGE

BEFORE again addressing Gabriel, Father d'Aigrigny carefully reflected; and his countenance, lately so disturbed, became gradually once more serene. He appeared to meditate and calculate the effects of the eloquence he was about to employ, upon an excellent and safe theme, which the *Socius*, struck with the danger of the situation, had suggested in a few lines rapidly written with a pencil, and which, in his despair, the reverend father had at first neglected.

Rodin resumed his post of observation near the mantel-piece, on which he leaned his elbow, after casting at Father d'Aigrigny a glance of disdainful and angry superiority, accompanied by a significant shrug of the shoulders.

After this involuntary manifestation, which was luckily not perceived by Father d'Aigrigny, the cadaverous face of the *Socius* resumed its icy calmness, and his flabby eyelids, raised a moment with anger and impatience, fell and half veiled his little dull eyes.

It must be confessed that Father d'Aigrigny, notwithstanding the ease and elegance of his speech, notwithstanding the seduction of his exquisite manners, his agreeable features, and the exterior of an accomplished and refined man of the world, was often subdued and governed by the unpitying firmness, the diabolical craft and depth of Rodin, the old, repulsive, dirty, miserably dressed man, who seldom abandoned his humble part of secretary and mute auditor.

The influence of education is so powerful that Gabriel, notwithstanding the formal rupture he had just provoked, felt himself still intimidated in presence of Father d'Aigrigny, and waited with painful anxiety for the answer of the reverend father to his express demand to be released from his vows.

His reverence, having doubtless regularly laid his plan of attack, at length broke silence, heaved a deep sigh, gave to his countenance, lately

so severe and irritated, a touching expression of kindness, and said to Gabriel in an affectionate voice :

“Forgive me, my dear son, for having kept silence so long ; but your



abrupt determination has so stunned me, and has raised within me so many painful thoughts, that I have had to reflect for some moments, to try and penetrate the cause of this rupture, and I think I have suc-

ceeded. You have well considered, my dear son, the serious nature of the step you are taking ! ”

“ Yes, father.”

“ And you have absolutely decided to abandon the society, even against my will ? ”

“ It would be painful to me, father ; but I must resign myself to it.”

“ It should be very painful to you, indeed, my dear son ; for you took the irrevocable vow freely, and this vow, according to our statutes, binds you not to quit the society unless with the consent of your superiors.”

“ I did not then know, father, the nature of the engagement I took. More enlightened now, I ask to withdraw myself ; my only desire is to obtain a curacy in some village far from Paris. I feel an irresistible vocation for such humble and useful functions. In the country there is so much misery, and such ignorance of all that could contribute to ameliorate the condition of the agricultural laborer, that his existence is as unhappy as that of a negro slave ; for what liberty has he ? and what instruction ? Oh ! it seems to me that, with God’s help, I might, as a village curate, render some services to humanity. It would therefore be painful to me, father, to see you refuse —— ”

“ Be satisfied, my son,” answered Father d’Aigrigny ; “ I will no longer seek to combat your desire to separate yourself from us.”

“ Then, father, you release me from my vows ? ”

“ I have not the power to do so, my dear son ; but I will write immediately to Rome to ask the necessary authority from our general.”

“ I thank you, father.”

“ Soon, my dear son, you will be delivered from these bonds, which you deem so heavy ; and the men you abandon will not the less continue to pray for you that God may preserve you from still greater wanderings. You think yourself released with regard to us, my dear son, but we do not think ourselves released with regard to you. It is not thus that we can get rid of the habit of paternal attachment. What would you have ? We look upon ourselves as bound to our children by the very benefits with which we have loaded them. You were poor, and an orphan ; we stretched out our arms to you as much from the interest you deserved, my dear son, as to spare your excellent adopted mother too great a burden.”

“ Father,” said Gabriel, with suppressed emotion, “ I am not ungrateful.”

“ I wish to believe so, my dear son. For long years we gave to you, as to our beloved child, food for the body and the soul. It pleases you now to renounce and abandon us. Not only do we consent to it, but now that I have penetrated the true motives of your rupture with us, it is my duty to release you from your vow.”

"Of what motives do you speak, father?"

"Alas! my dear son, I understand your fears. Dangers menace us—you know it well."

"Dangers, father?" cried Gabriel.

"It is impossible, my dear son, that you should not be aware that since the fall of our legitimate sovereigns, our natural protectors, revolutionary impiety becomes daily more and more threatening. We are oppressed with persecutions. I can, therefore, comprehend and appreciate, my dear son, the motive which, under such circumstances, induces you to separate from us."

"Father!" cried Gabriel, with as much indignation as grief, "you do not think that of me—you cannot think it."

Without noticing the protestation of Gabriel, Father d'Aigrigny continued his imaginary picture of the dangers of the Company, which, far from being really in peril, was already beginning secretly to recover its influence.

"Oh! if our Company were now as powerful as it was some years ago," resumed the reverend father; "if it were still surrounded by the respect and homage which are due to it from all true believers; in spite of the abominable calumnies with which we are assailed, then, my dear son, we should perhaps have hesitated to release you from your vows, and have rather endeavored to open your eyes to the light and save you from the fatal delusion to which you are a prey. But now that we are weak, oppressed, threatened on every side, it is our duty, it is an act of charity, not to force you to share in perils from which you have the prudence to wish to withdraw yourself."

So saying, Father d'Aigrigny cast a rapid glance at his *Socius*, who answered with a nod of approbation, accompanied by a movement of impatience that seemed to say: "Go on! go on!"

Gabriel was quite overcome. There was not in the whole world a heart more generous, loyal, and brave than his. We may judge of what he must have suffered on hearing the resolution he had come to thus misinterpreted.

"Father," he resumed, in an agitated voice, while his eyes filled with tears, "your words are cruel and unjust. You know that I am not a coward."

"No," said Rodin, in his sharp, cutting voice, addressing Father d'Aigrigny, and pointing to Gabriel with a disdainful look; "your dear son is only prudent."

These words from Rodin made Gabriel start; a slight blush colored his pale cheeks; his large and blue eyes sparkled with a generous anger; then, faithful to the precepts of Christian humility and resignation, he

conquered this irritable impulse, hung down his head, and, too much agitated to reply, remained silent and brushed away an unseen tear.

This tear did not escape the notice of the *Socius*. He saw in it, no doubt, a favorable symptom, for he exchanged a glance of satisfaction with Father d'Aigrigny. The latter was about to touch on a question of great interest, so, notwithstanding his self-command, his voice trembled slightly; but encouraged, or rather pushed on by a look from Rodin, who had become extremely attentive, he said to Gabriel:

"Another motive obliges us not to hesitate in releasing you from your vow, my dear son. It is a question of pure delicacy. You probably learned yesterday, from your adopted mother, that you will perhaps be called upon to take possession of an inheritance, of which the value is unknown."

Gabriel raised his head hastily, and said to Father d'Aigrigny:

"As I have already stated to M. Rodin, my adopted mother only talked of her scruples of conscience, and I was completely ignorant of the existence of the inheritance of which you speak."

The expression of indifference with which the young priest pronounced these last words was remarked by Rodin.

"Be it so," replied Father d'Aigrigny. "You are not aware of it—I believe you—though all appearances would tend to prove the contrary; to prove, indeed, that the knowledge of this inheritance was not unconnected with your resolution to separate from us."

"I do not understand you, father."

"It is very simple. Your rupture with us would then have two motives. First, we are in danger, and you think it prudent to leave us——"

"Father——"

"Allow me to finish, my dear son, and come to the second motive. If I am deceived, you can tell me so. These are the facts. Formerly, on the hypothesis that your family, of which you know nothing, might one day leave you some property, you made, in return for the care bestowed on you by the Company, a free gift of all you might hereafter possess, not to us, but to the poor, of whom we are the born shepherds."

"Well, father?" asked Gabriel, not seeing to what this preamble tended.

"Well, my dear son, now that you are sure of enjoying a competency, you wish, no doubt, by separating from us, to annul this donation made under other circumstances."

"To speak plainly, you violate your oath, because we are persecuted, and because you wish to take back your gifts," added Rodin in a sharp voice, as if to describe in the clearest and plainest manner the situation of Gabriel with regard to the Society of Jesus.

At this infamous accusation, Gabriel could only raise his hands and eyes to heaven, and exclaim, with an expression of despair: "Oh, Heaven!"

Once more exchanging a look of intelligence with Rodin, Father d'Aigrigny said to him, in a severe tone, as if reproaching him for his too savage frankness:

"I think you go too far. Our dear son could only have acted in the base and cowardly manner you suggest, had he known his position as an heir; but, since he affirms the contrary, we are bound to believe him—in spite of appearances."

"Father," said Gabriel, pale, agitated, trembling, and with half-suppressed grief and indignation, "I thank you, at least, for having suspended your judgment. No, I am not a coward; for Heaven is my witness, that I knew of no danger to which the society was exposed. Nor am I base and avaricious; for Heaven is also my witness, that only at this moment I learn from you, father, that I may be destined to inherit property, and ——"

"One word, my dear son. It is quite lately that I became informed of this circumstance, by the greatest chance in the world," said Father d'Aigrigny, interrupting Gabriel; "and that was thanks to some family papers which your adopted mother had given to her confessor, and which were intrusted to us when you entered our college. A little before your return from America, in arranging the archives of the Company, your file of papers fell into the hands of our father-attorney. It was examined, and we thus learned that one of your paternal ancestors, to whom the house in which we now are belonged, left a will which is to be opened to-day at noon. Yesterday, we believed you one of us; our statutes command that we should possess nothing of our own; you had corroborated those statutes, by a donation in favor of the patrimony of the poor—which we administer. It was no longer you, therefore, but the Company, which, in my person, presented itself as the inheritor in your place, furnished with your titles, which I have here ready in order. But now, my dear son, that you separate from us, you must present yourself in your own name. We came here as the representatives of the poor, to whom in former days you piously abandoned whatever goods might fall to your share. Now, on the contrary, the hope of a fortune changes your sentiments. You are free to resume your gifts."

Gabriel had listened to Father d'Aigrigny with painful impatience. At length he exclaimed:

"Do you mean to say, father, that you think me capable of canceling a donation freely made in favor of the Company, to which I am indebted

for my education? You believe me infamous enough to break my word in the hope of possessing a modest patrimony?"

"This patrimony, my dear son, may be small; but it may also be considerable."

"Well, father! if it were a king's fortune," cried Gabriel, with proud and noble indifference, "I should not speak otherwise; and I have, I think, the right to be believed. Listen to my fixed resolution. The Company to which I belong runs, you say, great dangers. I will inquire into these dangers. Should they prove threatening,—strong in the determination which morally separates me from you,—I will not leave you till I see the end of your perils. As for the inheritance, of which you believe me so desirous, I resign it to you formally, father, as I once freely promised. My only wish is that this property may be employed for the relief of the poor. I do not know what may be the amount of this fortune, but, large or small, it belongs to the Company, because I have thereto pledged my word. I have told you, father, that my chief desire is to obtain a humble curacy in some poor village—poor, above all—because there my services will be most useful. Thus, father, when a man who never spoke a falsehood in his life affirms to you that he only sighs for so humble an existence, you ought, I think, to believe him incapable of snatching back, from motives of avarice, gifts already made."

Father d'Aigrigny had now as much trouble to restrain his joy as he before had to conceal his terror. He appeared, however, tolerably calm, and said to Gabriel:

"I did not expect less from you, my dear son."

Then he made a sign to Rodin to invite him to interpose. The latter perfectly understood his superior. He left the chimney, drew near to Gabriel and leaned against the table, upon which stood paper and inkstand. Then, beginning mechanically to beat the tattoo with the tips of his coarse fingers, in all their array of flat and dirty nails, he said to Father d'Aigrigny:

"All this is very fine! but your dear son gives you no security for the fulfillment of his promise, except an oath, and that, we know, is of little value."

"Sir!" cried Gabriel.

"Allow me," said Rodin coldly "The law does not acknowledge our existence, and therefore can take no cognizance of donations made in favor of the Company. You might resume to-morrow what you are pleased to give us to-day."

"But my oath, sir!" cried Gabriel.

Rodin looked at him fixedly as he answered: "Your oath? Did you

not swear eternal obedience to the Company, and never to separate from us? — and of what weight now are these oaths?"

For a moment Gabriel was embarrassed; but, feeling how false was this logic, he rose, calm and dignified, went to seat himself at the desk, took up a pen, and wrote as follows:

"Before God, who sees and hears me, and in presence of you, Father d'Aigrigny and M. Rodin, I renew and confirm, freely and voluntarily, the absolute donation made by me to the Society of Jesus, in the person of the said Father d'Aigrigny, of all the property which may hereafter belong to me, whatever may be its value. I swear, on pain of infamy, to perform this irrevocable promise, whose accomplishment I regard, in my soul and conscience, as the discharge of a debt and the fulfillment of a pious duty.

"This donation having for its object the acknowledgment of past services and the relief of the poor, no future occurrences can at all modify it. For the very reason that I know I could one day legally cancel the present free and deliberate act, I declare that if ever I were to attempt such a thing, under any possible circumstances, I should deserve the contempt and horror of all honest people.

"In witness whereof I have written this paper, on the 13th of February, 1832, in Paris, immediately before the opening of the testament of one of my paternal ancestors.

"GABRIEL DE RENNEPONT."

As he arose, the young priest delivered this document to Rodin, without uttering a word. The *Socius* read it attentively, and, still impassible, answered, as he looked at Gabriel: "Well, it is a written oath — that is all."

Gabriel dwelt stupefied at the audacity of Rodin, who ventured to tell him that this document, in which he renewed his donation in so noble, generous, and spontaneous a manner, was not at all sufficient. The *Socius* was the first again to break the silence, and he said to Father d'Aigrigny, with his usual cool impudence:

"One of two things must be. Either your dear son means to render this donation absolutely valuable and irrevocable,— or ——"

"Sir," exclaimed Gabriel, interrupting him, and hardly able to restrain himself, "spare yourself and me such a shameful supposition."

"Well, then," resumed Rodin, impassible as ever, "as you are perfectly decided to make this donation a serious reality, what objection can you have to secure it legally?"

"None, sir," said Gabriel bitterly, "since my written and sworn promise will not suffice you."

"My dear son," said Father d'Aigrigny affectionately, "if this were a donation for my own advantage, believe me, I should require no better security than your word. But I am here, as it were, the agent of the society, or rather the trustee of the poor, who will profit by your generosity. For the sake of humanity, therefore, we cannot secure this gift by too many legal precautions, so that the unfortunate objects of our

care may have certainty instead of vague hopes to depend upon. God may call you to him at any moment, and who shall say that your heirs will be so ready to keep the oath you have taken ? ”

“ You are right, father,” said Gabriel sadly ; “ I had not thought of the case of death, which is yet so probable.”

Hereupon, Samuel opened the door of the room and said :

“ Gentlemen, the notary has just arrived. Shall I show him in ? At ten o'clock precisely the door of the house will be opened.”

“ We are the more glad to see the notary,” said Rodin, “ as we just happen to have some business with him. Pray ask him to walk in.”

“ I will bring him to you instantly,” replied Samuel, as he went out.

“ Here is a notary,” said Rodin to Gabriel. “ If you have still the same intentions, you can legalize your donation in presence of this public officer, and thus save yourself from a great burden for the future.”


“ Sir,” said Gabriel, “ happen what may, I am as irrevocably engaged by this written promise, which I beg you to keep, father,”—and he handed the paper to Father d'Aigrigny,—“ as by the legal document which I am about to sign,” he added, turning to Rodin.

“ Silence, my dear son,” said Father d'Aigrigny ; “ here is the notary,” just as the latter entered the room.

During the interview of the administrative officer with Rodin, Gabriel, and Father d'Aigrigny, we shall conduct the reader to the interior of the walled-up house.

CHAPTER VI

THE RED ROOM

S Samuel had said, the door of the walled-up house had just been disencumbered of the bricks, lead, and iron which had hidden it from view, and its panels of carved oak appeared as fresh and sound as on the day when they had first been withdrawn from the influence of air and time.

The laborers, having completed their work, stood waiting upon the steps, as impatient and curious as the notary's clerk, who had superintended the operation, when they saw Samuel slowly advancing across the garden with a great bunch of keys in his hand.

"Now, my friends," said the old man when he had reached the steps, "your work is finished. The master of this gentleman will pay you, and I have only to show you out by the street-door."

"Come, come, my good fellow," cried the clerk, "just think a bit. We are just at the most interesting and curious moment; I and these honest masons are burning to see the interior of this mysterious house, and you would be cruel enough to send us away? Impossible!"

"I regret the necessity, sir, but so it must be. I must be the first to enter this dwelling, absolutely alone, before introducing the heirs, in order to read the will."

"And who gave you such ridiculous and barbarous orders?" cried the clerk, singularly disappointed.

"My father, sir."

"A most respectable authority, no doubt; but come, my worthy guardian, my excellent guardian," resumed the clerk, "be a good fellow, and let us just take a peep in at the door."

"Yes, yes, sir, only a peep!" cried the heroes of the trowel, with a supplicating air.

"It is disagreeable to have to refuse you, gentlemen," answered Samuel; "but I cannot open this door until I am alone."

The masons, seeing the inflexibility of the old man, unwillingly descended the steps; but the clerk had resolved to dispute the ground inch by inch, and exclaimed: "I shall wait for my master. I do not

leave the house without him. He may want me; and whether I remain on these steps or elsewhere can be of little consequence to you, my worthy keeper."

The clerk was interrupted in his appeal by his master himself, who called out, from the farther side of the court-yard, with an air of business:

"M. Piston! quick, M. Piston; come directly!"

"What the devil does he want with me?" cried the clerk, in a passion. "He calls me just at the moment when I might have seen something."

"M. Piston," resumed the voice, approaching, "do you not hear?"

While Samuel let out the masons, the clerk saw, through a clump of trees, his master running toward him bareheaded, and with an air of singular haste and importance. The clerk was therefore obliged to leave the steps to answer the notary's summons, toward whom he went with a very bad grace.

"Sir, sir," said M. Dumesnil, "I have been calling you this hour, with all my might."

"I did not hear you, sir," said M. Piston.

"You must be deaf, then. Have you any change about you?"

"Yes, sir," answered the clerk, with some surprise.

"Well, then, you must go instantly to the nearest stamp-office and fetch me three or four large sheets of stamped paper to draw up a deed. Run! it is wanted directly."

"Yes, sir," said the clerk, casting a rueful and regretful glance at the door of the walled-up house.

"But make haste, will you, M. Piston," said the notary

"I do not know, sir, where to get any stamped paper."

"Here is the keeper," replied M. Dumesnil. "He will no doubt be able to tell you."

At this instant Samuel was returning, after showing the masons out by the street-door.

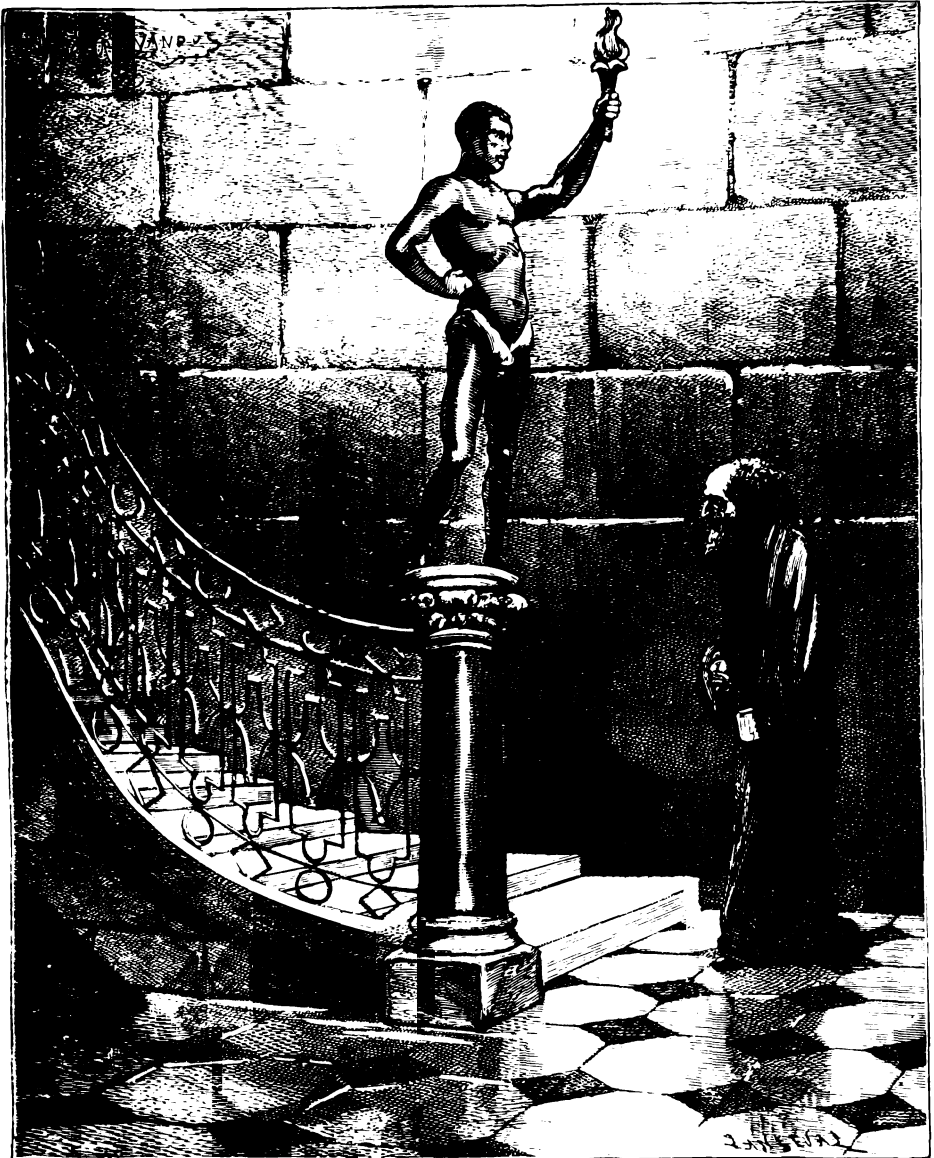
"Sir," said the notary to him, "will you please to tell me where we can get stamped paper?"

"Close by, sir," answered Samuel; "in the tobacconist's, No. 17 Rue Vieille du Temple."

"You hear, M. Piston?" said the notary to his clerk; "you can get the stamps at the tobacconist's, No. 17 Rue Vieille du Temple. Be quick! for this deed must be executed immediately, before the opening of the will. Time presses."

"Very well, sir; I will make haste," answered the clerk discontentedly, as he followed his master, who hurried back into the room where he had left Rodin, Gabriel, and Father d'Aigrigny.

During this time Samuel, ascending the steps, had reached the door, now disencumbered of the stone, iron, and lead with which it had been blocked up. It was with deep emotion that the old man, having selected



from his bunch of keys the one he wanted, inserted it in the key-hole and made the door turn upon its hinges.

Immediately he felt on his face a current of damp, cold air, like that which exhales from a cellar suddenly opened.

Having carefully reclosed and double-locked the door, the Jew advanced along the hall, lighted by a glass trefoil over the arch of the door. The panes had lost their transparency by the effect of time, and now had the appearance of ground-glass.

This hall, paved with alternate squares of black and white marble, was vast, sonorous, and contained a broad staircase leading to the first story. The walls of smooth stone offered not the least appearance of decay or dampness; the stair-rail of wrought iron presented no traces of rust; it was inserted, just above the bottom step, into a column of gray granite, which sustained a statue of black marble, representing a negro bearing a flambeau. This statue had a strange countenance, the pupils of the eyes being made of white marble.

The Jew's heavy tread echoed beneath the lofty dome of the hall. The grandson of Isaac Samuel experienced a melancholy feeling as he reflected that the footsteps of his ancestor had probably been the last which had resounded through this dwelling, of which he had closed the doors a hundred and fifty years before; for the faithful friend, in favor of whom M. de Rennepont had made a feigned transfer of the property, had afterward parted with the same, to place it in the name of Samuel's grandfather, who had transmitted it to his descendants, as if it had been his own inheritance.

To these thoughts, in which Samuel was wholly absorbed, was joined the remembrance of the light seen that morning through the seven openings in the leaden cover of the belvedere; and, in spite of the firmness of his character, the old man could not repress a shudder as, taking a second key from his bunch, and reading upon the label, "*The key of the Red Room,*" he opened a pair of large folding-doors, leading to the inner apartments.

The window which, of all those in the house, had alone been opened lighted this large room, hung with damask, the deep purple of which had undergone no alteration. A thick Turkey carpet covered the floor, and large arm-chairs of gilded wood, in the severe Louis XIV. style, were symmetrically arranged along the wall. A second door, leading to the next room, was just opposite the entrance. The wainscoting and the cornice were white, relieved with fillets and moldings of burnished gold.

On each side of this door was a large piece of buhl-furniture, inlaid with brass and porcelain, supporting ornamental sets of sea-green vases. The window was hung with heavy, deep-fringed damask curtains, surmounted by scalloped drapery, with silk tassels, directly opposite the chimney-piece of dark-gray marble, adorned with carved brass-work. Rich chandeliers and a clock in the same style as the furniture were reflected in a large Venice glass with beveled edges.

A round table, covered with a cloth of crimson velvet, was placed in the center of this saloon.

As he approached this table, Samuel perceived a piece of white vellum, on which were inscribed these words :

“ My will is to be opened in this room. The other apartments are to remain closed, until after the reading of my last will. ”

“ M. DE R. ”

“ Yes,” said the Jew, as he perused with emotion these lines traced so long ago ; “ this is the same recommendation as that which I received from my father ; for it would seem that the other apartments of this house are filled with objects on which M. de Rennepont set a high value, not for their intrinsic worth, but because of their origin. The *Hall of Mourning* must be a strange and mysterious chamber.”

“ Well,” added Samuel, as he drew from his pocket a register bound in black shagreen, with a brass lock, from which he drew the key, after placing it upon the table, “ here is the statement of the property in hand which I have been ordered to bring hither, before the arrival of the heirs.”

The deepest silence reigned in the room, at the moment when Samuel placed the register on the table. Suddenly a simple and yet most startling occurrence roused him from his reverie.

In the next apartment was heard the clear, silvery tone of a clock, slowly striking ten.

And the hour was ten.

Samuel had too much sense to believe in perpetual motion, or in the possibility of constructing a clock to go for one hundred and fifty years. He asked himself, therefore, with surprise and alarm, how this clock could still be going, and how it could mark so exactly the hour of the day.

Urged with restless curiosity, the old man was about to enter the room ; but recollecting the recommendation of his father, which had now been confirmed by the few lines he had just read from De Rennepont’s pen, he stopped at the door and listened with extreme attention.

He heard nothing, absolutely nothing, but the last dying vibration of the clock. After having long reflected upon this strange fact, Samuel, comparing it with the no less extraordinary circumstance of the light perceived that morning through the apertures in the belvedere, concluded that there must be some connection between these two incidents.

If the old man could not penetrate the true cause of these extraordinary appearances, he at least explained them to himself by remembering the subterraneous communications which, according to tradition, were said to exist between the cellars of this house and distant places ; and he conjectured that unknown and mysterious personages thus gained access to it two or three times in a century

Absorbed in these thoughts, Samuel approached the fireplace, which, as we have said, was directly opposite the window. Just then a bright ray of sunlight, piercing the clouds, shone full upon two large portraits hung upon either side of the fireplace, and not before remarked by the Jew. They were painted life-size and represented one a woman, the other a man.

By the sober yet powerful coloring of these paintings, by the large and vigorous style, it was easy to recognize a master's hand. It would have been difficult to find models more fitted to inspire a great painter.

The woman appeared to be from five-and-twenty to thirty years of age. Magnificent brown hair with golden tints crowned a forehead white, noble, and lofty. Her head-dress, far from recalling the fashion which Madame de Sévigné brought in during the age of Louis XIV., reminded one rather of some of the portraits of Paul Veronese, in which the hair encircles the face in broad, undulating bands surmounted by a thick plait, like a crown, at the back of the head. The eyebrows, finely penciled, were arched over large eyes of bright, sapphire blue. Their gaze, at once proud and mournful, had something fatal about it. The nose, finely formed, terminated in slight, dilated nostrils; a half smile, almost of pain, contracted the mouth; the face was a long oval, and the complexion, extremely pale, was hardly shaded on the cheek by a light rose-color. The position of the head and neck announced a rare mixture of grace and dignity. A sort of tunic or robe of glossy black material came as high as the commencement of her shoulders and, just marking her lithe and tall figure, reached down to her feet, which were almost entirely concealed by the folds of this garment.

The attitude was full of nobleness and simplicity. The head looked white and luminous, standing out from a dark-gray sky, marbled by purple clouds at the horizon, upon which were visible the bluish summits of distant hills in deep shadow. The arrangement of the picture, as well as the warm tints of the foreground, contrasting strongly with these distant objects, showed that the woman was placed upon an eminence, from which she could view the whole horizon.

The countenance was deeply pensive and desponding. There was an expression of supplicating and resigned grief, particularly in her look, half raised to heaven, which one would have thought impossible to picture.

On the left side of the fireplace was the other portrait, painted with like vigor. It represented a man between thirty and thirty-five years of age, of tall stature. A large brown cloak, which hung round him in graceful folds, did not quite conceal a black doublet, buttoned up to

the neck, over which fell a square white collar. The handsome and expressive head was marked with stern, powerful lines, which did not exclude an admirable air of suffering, resignation, and ineffable goodness. The hair, as well as the beard and eyebrows, was black; and the latter, by some singular caprice of nature, instead of being separated and forming two distinct arches, extended from one temple to the other in a single bow, and seemed to mark the forehead of this man with a black line.

The background of this picture also represented a stormy sky; but, beyond some rocks in the distance, the sea was visible, and appeared to mingle with the dark clouds.

The sun, just now shining upon these two remarkable figures (which it appeared impossible to forget, after once seeing them), augmented their brilliancy.

Starting from his reverie, and casting his eyes by chance upon these portraits, Samuel was greatly struck with them. They appeared almost alive.

"What noble and handsome faces!" he exclaimed, as he approached to examine them more closely. "Whose are these portraits? They are not those of any of the Rennepont family, for my father told me that they are all in the *Hall of Mourning*. Alas!" added the old man, "one might think, from the great sorrow expressed in their countenances, that they ought to have a place in that mourning-chamber."

After a moment's silence, Samuel resumed: "Let me prepare everything for this solemn assembly, for it has struck ten." So saying, he placed the gilded arm-chairs round the table, and then continued, with a pensive air: "The hour approaches, and of the descendants of my grandfather's benefactor, we have seen only this young priest with the angelic countenance. Can he be the sole representative of the Rennepont family? He is a priest, and this family will finish with him! Well! the moment is come when I must open this door, that the will may be read. Bathsheba is bringing hither the notary. They knock at the door; it is time!" And Samuel, after casting a last glance toward the place where the clock had struck ten, hastened to the outer door, behind which voices were now audible.

He turned the key twice in the lock, and threw the portals open. To his great regret, he saw only Gabriel on the steps, between Rodin and Father d'Aigrigny. The notary, and Bathsheba, who had served them as a guide, waited a little behind the principal group.

Samuel could not repress a sigh, as he stood bowing on the threshold, and said to them:

"All is ready, gentlemen. You may walk in."

CHAPTER VII

THE TESTAMENT



WHEN Gabriel, Rodin, and Father d'Aigrigny entered the Red Room, they were differently affected.

Gabriel, pale and sad, felt a kind of painful impatience. He was anxious to quit this house, though he had already relieved himself of a great weight, by executing before the notary, secured by every legal formality, a deed making over all his rights of inheritance to Father d'Aigrigny

Until now it had not occurred to the young priest that in bestowing the care upon him, which he was about to reward so generously, and in forcing his vocation by a sacrilegious falsehood, the only object of Father d'Aigrigny might have been to secure the success of a dark intrigue.

In acting as he did, Gabriel was not yielding, in his view of the question, to a sentiment of exaggerated delicacy. He had made this donation freely, many years before. He would have looked upon it as infamy now to withdraw it. It was hard enough to be suspected of cowardice; for nothing in the world would he have incurred the least reproach of cupidity

The missionary must have been endowed with a very rare and excellent nature, or this flower of scrupulous probity would have withered beneath the deleterious and demoralizing influence of his education; but happily, as cold sometimes preserves from corruption, the icy atmosphere in which he had passed a portion of his childhood and youth had benumbed but not ruined his generous qualities, which had indeed soon revived in the warm air of liberty.

Father d'Aigrigny, much paler and more agitated than Gabriel, strove to excuse and explain his anxiety by attributing it to the sorrow he experienced at the rupture of his dear son with the society.

Rodin, calm and perfectly master of himself, saw with secret rage the strong emotion of Father d'Aigrigny, which might have inspired a

man less confiding than Gabriel with strange suspicions. Yet, notwithstanding his apparent indifference, the *Socius* was perhaps still more ardently impatient than his superior for the success of this important affair.

Samuel appeared quite desponding, no other heir but Gabriel having presented himself. No doubt the old man felt a lively sympathy for the priest; but then *he* was a priest, and with him would finish the line of Rennepont; and this immense fortune, accumulated with so much labor, would either be again distributed or employed otherwise than the testator had desired.

The different actors in this scene were standing round the table. As they were about to seat themselves, at the invitation of the notary, Samuel pointed to the register bound in black shagreen, and said:

"I was ordered, sir, to deposit here this register. It is locked. I will deliver up the key immediately after the reading of the will."

"This course is, in fact, directed by the note which accompanies the will," said M. Dumesnil, "as it was deposited, in the year 1682, in the hands of Master Thomas Le Semelier, counselor of the king, and notary of the Châtelet of Paris, then living at No. 13 Place Royale."

So saying, M. Dumesnil drew from a portfolio of red morocco a large parchment envelope, grown yellow with time; to this envelope was annexed by a silken thread a note also upon vellum.

"Gentlemen," said the notary, "if you please to sit down I will read the subjoined note, to regulate the formalities at the opening of the will."

The notary, Rodin, Father d'Aigrigny, and Gabriel took seats. The young priest, having his back turned to the fireplace, could not see the two portraits. In spite of the notary's invitation, Samuel remained standing behind the chair of that functionary, who read as follows:

"On the 13th February, 1832, my will shall be carried to No. 3, in the Rue Saint François.

"At ten o'clock precisely the door of the Red Room shall be opened to my heirs, who will no doubt have arrived long before at Paris in anticipation of this day, and will have had time to establish their line of descent.

"As soon as they are assembled the will shall be read, and, at the last stroke of noon, the inheritance shall be finally settled in favor of those of my kindred who, according to my commands (preserved, I hope, by tradition in my family, during a century and a half), shall present themselves in person, and not by agents, before twelve o'clock on the 13th of February in the Rue Saint François."

Having read these words in a sonorous voice, the notary stopped an instant, and resumed in a solemn tone:

"M. Gabriel François Marie de Rennepont, priest, having established

by legal documents his descent on the father's side and his relationship to the testator, and being at this hour the only one of the descendants of the Rennepont family here present, I open the will in his presence as it has been ordered."

So saying, the notary drew from its envelope the will, which had been previously opened by the President of the Tribunal, with the formalities required by law.

Father d'Aigrigny leaned forward and, resting his elbow on the table, seemed to pant for breath. Gabriel prepared himself to listen with more curiosity than interest.

Rodin was seated at some distance from the table, with his old hat between his knees, in the bottom of which, half hidden by the folds of a shabby blue cotton handkerchief, he had placed his watch. The attention of the *Socius* was divided between the least noise from without and the slow revolution of the hands of the watch, which he followed with his little, wrathful eye as if hastening their progress, so great was his impatience for the hour of noon.

The notary, unfolding the sheet of parchment, read what follows, in the midst of profound attention:

" 'HAMLET OF VILLETANEUSE, February 13th, 1682.

" 'I am about to escape, by death, from the disgrace of the galleys, to which the implacable enemies of my family have caused me to be condemned as a relapsed heretic.

" 'Moreover, life is too bitter for me since the death of my son, the victim of a mysterious crime.

" 'At nineteen years of age — poor Henry! — and his murderers unknown — no, not unknown — if I may trust my presentiments.

" 'To preserve my fortune for my son, I had feigned to abjure the Protestant faith. As long as that beloved boy lived, I scrupulously kept up Catholic appearances. The imposture revolted me, but the interest of my son was concerned.

" 'When they killed him, this deceit became insupportable to me. I was watched, accused, and condemned as relapsed. My property has been confiscated, and I am sentenced to the galleys.

" 'We live in a terrible time. Misery and servitude! sanguinary despotism and religious intolerance! Oh, it is sweet to abandon life! sweet to rest, and see no more such evils and such sorrows!

" 'In a few hours I shall enjoy that rest. I shall die. Let me think of those who will survive — or, rather, of those who will live perhaps in better times.

" 'Out of all my fortune, there remains to me a sum of fifty thousand crowns, deposited in a friend's hands.

" 'I have no longer a son; but I have numerous relations, exiled in various parts of Europe. This sum of fifty thousand crowns, divided between them, would profit each of them very little. I have disposed of it differently.

" 'In this I have followed the wise counsels of a man whom I venerate as the image of God on earth, for his intelligence, wisdom, and goodness are almost divine.

" 'Twice in the course of my life have I seen this man, under very fateful circumstances; twice have I owed him safety, — once of the soul, once of the body.

“Alas! he might perhaps have saved my poor child, but he came too late — too late!

“Before he left me, he wished to divert me from the intention of dying — for he knew all. But his voice was powerless. My grief, my regret, my discouragement, were too much for him.



“It is strange! When he was convinced of my resolution, to finish my days by violence, some words of terrible bitterness escaped him, making me believe that he envied me — my fate — my death!

“Is he perhaps condemned to live?

“ ‘Yes; he has, no doubt, condemned himself to be useful to humanity, and yet life is heavy on him, for I heard him repeat one day, with an expression of despair and weariness that I have never forgotten: “Life! life! who will deliver me from it?”

“ ‘Is life then so very burdensome to him?

“ ‘He is gone. His last words have made me look for my departure with serenity. Thanks to him, my death shall not be without fruit.

“ ‘Thanks to him, these lines, written at this moment by a man who in a few hours will have ceased to live, may perhaps be the source of great things a century and a half hence—yes! great and noble things, if my last will is piously followed by my descendants, for it is to them that I here address myself.

“ ‘That they may understand and appreciate this last will,—which I commend to the care of the unborn, who dwell in the future whither I am hastening,—they must know the persecutors of my family and avenge their ancestor, but by a noble vengeance.

“ ‘My grandfather was a Catholic. Induced by perfidious counsels rather than religious zeal, he attached himself, though a layman, to a society whose power has always been terrible and mysterious—the Society of Jesus——’ ”

At these words of the testament, Father d'Aigrigny, Rodin, and Gabriel looked involuntarily at each other. The notary, who had not perceived this action, continued to read:

“ ‘After some years, during which he had never ceased to profess the most absolute devotion to this society, he was suddenly enlightened by fearful revelations as to the secret ends it pursued and the means it employed.

“ ‘This was in 1610, a month before the assassination of Henry IV.

“ ‘My grandfather, terrified at the secret of which he had become the unwilling depositary, and which was to be fully explained by the death of the best of kings, not only broke with the society, but, as if Catholicism itself had been answerable for the crimes of its members, he abandoned the Romish religion, in which he had hitherto lived, and became a Protestant.

“ ‘Undeniable proofs, attesting the connivance of two members of the society with Ravallac, a connivance also proved in the case of Jean Chatel, the regicide, were in my grandfather's possession.

“ ‘This was the first cause of the violent hatred of the society for our family. Thank Heaven, these papers have been placed in safety, and if my last will is executed, will be found marked *A. M. C. D. G.*, in the ebony casket in the *Hall of Mourning*, in the house in the Rue Saint François.

“ ‘My father was also exposed to these secret persecutions. His ruin, and perhaps his death, would have been the consequence had it not been for the intervention of an angelic woman, toward whom he felt an almost religious veneration.

“ ‘The portrait of this woman, whom I saw a few years ago, as well as that of the man whom I hold in the greatest reverence, were painted by me from memory, and have been placed in the Red Room in the Rue Saint François, to be gratefully valued, I hope, by the descendants of my family.’ ”

For some moments Gabriel had become more and more attentive to the reading of this testament. He thought within himself by how strange a coincidence one of his ancestors had, two centuries before, broken with the Society of Jesus, as he himself had just done; and

that from this rupture, two centuries old, dated also that species of hatred with which the Society of Jesus had always pursued his family.

Nor did the young priest find it less strange that this inheritance, transmitted to him after a lapse of a hundred and fifty years from one of his kindred (the victim of the Society of Jesus), should return by a voluntary act to the coffers of this same society.

When the notary read the passage relative to the two portraits, Gabriel, who, like Father d'Aigrigny, sat with his back toward the pictures, turned round to look at them. Hardly had the missionary cast his eyes on the portrait of the woman, than he uttered a loud cry of surprise, and almost terror. The notary paused in his reading and looked uneasily at the young priest.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LAST STROKE OF NOON



AT the cry uttered by Gabriel, the notary had stopped reading the testament, and Father d'Aigrigny hastily drew near the young priest. The latter rose trembling from his seat, and gazed with increasing stupor at the female portrait.

Then he said in a low voice, as if speaking to himself, "Good Heaven! is it possible that nature can produce such resemblances? Those eyes, so proud and yet so sad, that forehead, that pale complexion; yes, all her features are the same, all of them!"

"My dear son, what is the matter?" said Father d'Aigrigny, as astonished as Samuel and the notary

"Eight months ago," replied the missionary, in a voice of deep emotion, without once taking his eyes from the picture, "I was in the power of the Indians, in the heart of the Rocky Mountains. They had crucified and were beginning to scalp me; I was on the point of death, when Divine Providence sent me unexpected aid—sent me this woman for a deliverer."

"That woman!" cried Samuel, Father d'Aigrigny, and the notary, all together.

Rodin alone appeared completely indifferent to this episode of the picture. His face contracted with angry impatience, he bit his nails to the quick, as he contemplated with agony the slow progress of the hands of his watch.

"What! that woman saved your life?" resumed Father d'Aigrigny

"Yes, this woman," replied Gabriel, in a still lower and more trembling voice; "this woman—or rather a woman so much resembling her that if this picture had not been here for a century and a half I should have felt sure it was the same; nor can I explain to myself that so striking a resemblance could be the effect of chance. Well," added he, after a moment's silence, as he heaved a profound sigh, "the mysteries of Nature and the will of God are impenetrable."

Gabriel fell back into his chair, in the midst of a general silence, which was broken by Father d'Aigrigny saying: "It is a case of extraordinary resemblance; that is all, my dear son. Only, the natural gratitude which you feel toward your benefactress makes you take a deep interest in this singular coincidence."

Rodin, bursting with impatience, here said to the notary, by whose side he stood: "It seems to me, sir, that all this little romance has nothing to do with the will."

"You are right," answered the notary, resuming his seat; "but the fact is so extraordinary, and, as you say, romantic, that one cannot help sharing in this gentleman's astonishment."

He pointed to Gabriel, who, with his elbow resting on the arms of the chair, leaned his forehead upon his hand, apparently quite absorbed in thought. The notary continued the reading of the will, as follows:

"Such are the persecutions to which my family has been exposed on the part of the Society of Jesus.

"The society possesses at this hour the whole of my confiscated property. I am about to die. May its hatred perish with me, and spare my kindred, whose fate at this solemn moment is my last and only thought.

"This morning I sent for a man of long-tried probity — Isaac Samuel. He owes his life to me, and every day I congratulate myself on having been able to preserve to the world so honest and excellent a creature.

"Before the confiscation of my property, Isaac Samuel had long managed it with as much intelligence as uprightness. I have intrusted him with the fifty thousand crowns returned to me by a faithful friend. Isaac Samuel, and his descendants after him, to whom he will leave this debt of gratitude, will invest the above sum, and allow it to accumulate, until the expiration of the hundred-and-fiftieth year from this time.

"The amount thus accumulated may become enormous and constitute a royal fortune if no unfavorable event should occur. May my descendants attend to my wishes as to the division and employment of this immense sum!

"In a century and a half there happen so many changes, so many varieties of fortunes, such a rise and fall in the condition of the successive generations of a family, that probably a hundred and fifty years hence my descendants will belong to various classes of society, and thus represent the divers social elements of their time.

"There may perhaps be among them men of great intelligence, great courage, or great virtue — learned men, or names illustrious in arts and arms. There may perhaps also be obscure workmen or humble citizens — perhaps also, alas! great criminals.

"However this may be, my most earnest desire is that my descendants should combine together, and, reconstituting one family by a close and sincere union, put into practice the divine words of Christ, "*Lore ye one another.*"

"This union would have a salutary tendency; for it seems to me that upon union, upon the association of men together, must depend the future happiness of mankind.

"The Company which so long persecuted my family is one of the most striking examples of the power of association, even when applied to evil.

"There is something so fruitful and divine in this principle, that it sometimes forces to good the worst and most dangerous combinations.

"Thus the missions have thrown a scanty but pure and generous light on the dark-

ness of this Company of Jesus, founded with the detestable and impious aim of destroying, by a homicidal education, all will, thought, liberty, and intelligence in the people, so as to deliver them trembling, superstitious, brutal, and helpless to the despotism of kings, governed in their turn by confessors belonging to the society.' ”

At this passage of the will there was another strange look exchanged between Gabriel and Father d'Aigrigny. The notary continued :

“ If a perverse association, based upon the degradation of humanity, upon fear and despotism, and followed by the maledictions of the people, has survived for centuries, and often governed the world by craft and terror, how would it be with an association which, taking fraternity and evangelic love for its means, had for its end to deliver man and woman from all degrading slavery, to invite to the enjoyment of terrestrial happiness those who have hitherto known nothing of life but its sorrows and miseries, and to glorify and enrich the labor that feeds the state; to enlighten those whom ignorance has depraved; to favor the free expansion of all the passions which God in his infinite wisdom and inexhaustible goodness gave to man as so many powerful levers; to sanctify all the gifts of Heaven,—love, maternity, strength, intelligence, beauty, genius; to make men truly religious and deeply grateful to their Creator, by making them understand the splendors of nature and bestowing on them their rightful share in the treasures which have been poured upon us ?

“ Oh ! if it be Heaven's will that in a century and a half the descendants of my family, faithful to the last wishes of a heart that loved humanity, meet in this sacred union !—if it be Heaven's will that amongst them be found charitable and passionate souls full of commiseration for those who suffer, and lofty minds ardent for liberty; warm and eloquent natures; resolute characters; women who unite beauty and wit with goodness, oh ! then, how fruitful, how powerful will be the harmonious union of all these ideas and influences and forces; of all these attractions grouped around that princely fortune, which, concentrated by association and wisely managed, would realize in practice the most admirable of Utopias.

“ What a wondrous center of fertile and generous thoughts ! what precious and life-giving rays would stream incessantly from this focus of charity, emancipation, and love ! What great things might be attempted, what magnificent examples given to the world ! What a divine mission ! What an irresistible tendency toward good might be impressed on the whole human race by a family thus situated and in possession of such means !

“ And, then, such a beneficent association would be able to combat the fatal conspiracy of which I am the victim, and which in a century and a half may have lost none of its formidable power.

“ So, to this work of darkness, restraint, and despotism, which weighs heavily on the Christian world, my family would oppose their work of light, expansion, and liberty !

“ The genii of good and evil would stand face to face. The struggle would commence, and God would protect the right.

“ And that these immense pecuniary resources, which will give so much power to my family, may not be exhausted by the course of years, my heirs, following my last will, are to place out, upon the same conditions, double the sum that I have invested — so that, a century and a half later, a new source of power and action will be at the disposal of their descendants. What a perpetuity of good !

“ In the ebony cabinet of the *Hall of Mourning* will be found some practical suggestions on the subject of this association.

“ Such is my last will — or, rather, such are my last hopes.

“ When I require absolutely the members of my family should appear in person in the

Rue Saint François, on the day of the opening of this testament, it is for this end that, united in that solemn moment, they may see and know each other. My words may then, perhaps, have some effect upon them; and, instead of living divided, they will combine together. It will be for their own interest, and my wishes will thus be accomplished.

“When I sent, a few days ago, to those of my family whom exile has dispersed over Europe, a medal on which is engraved the date of the convocation of my heirs, a century and a half from this time, I was forced to keep secret my true motive, and only to tell them that my descendants would find it greatly to their interest to attend this meeting.

“I have acted thus because I know the craft and perseverance of the society of which I have been the victim. If they could guess that my descendants would hereafter have to divide immense sums between them, my family would run the risk of much fraud and malice, through the fatal recommendations handed down from age to age in the Society of Jesus.

“May these precautions be successful! May the wish expressed upon those medals be faithfully transmitted from generation to generation!

“If I fix a day and hour in which my inheritance shall irrevocably fall to those of my descendants who shall appear in the Rue Saint François on the 13th February, 1832, it is that all delays must have a term, and that my heirs will have been sufficiently informed years before of the great importance of this meeting.

“After the reading of my testament, the person who shall then be the trustee of the accumulated funds shall make known their amount, so that, with the last stroke of noon, they may be divided between my heirs then and there present.

“The different apartments of the house shall then be opened to them. They will see in them divers objects well worthy of interest, pity, and respect — particularly in the *Hall of Mourning*.

“My desire is that the house may not be sold, but that it may remain furnished as it is, and serve as a place of meeting for my descendants, if, as I hope, they attend to my last wishes.

“If, on the contrary, they are divided amongst themselves; if, instead of uniting for one of the most generous enterprises that ever signalized an age, they yield to the influence of selfish passions; if they prefer a sterile individuality to a fruitful association; if, in this immense fortune, they see only an opportunity for frivolous dissipation or sordid interest, may they be accursed by all those whom they might have loved, succored, and unfettered! and then let this house be utterly demolished and destroyed, and the papers, of which Isaac Samuel possesses the inventory, as well as the two portraits in the Red Room, be burnt by the guardian of the property.

“I have spoken. My duty is accomplished. In all this I have followed the counsels of the man whom I revere and love as the image of God upon earth.

“The faithful friend who preserved for me the fifty thousand crowns, the wreck of my fortune, knows the use I mean to make of them. I could not refuse his friendship this mark of confidence. But I have concealed from him the name of Isaac Samuel, for to have mentioned it might have exposed this latter and his descendants to great dangers.

“In a short time this friend, who knows not that my resolution to die is so near its accomplishment, will come hither with my notary. Into their hands, after the usual formalities, I shall deliver my sealed will and testament.

“Such is my last will. I leave its execution to the superintending care of Providence. God will protect the cause of love, peace, union, and liberty.

“This *mystic testament* having been freely made by me, and written entirely with my own hand, I intend and will its scrupulous execution both in spirit and the letter.

“This 13th day of February, 1682, at one o'clock in the afternoon.

“MARIUS DE RENNEPONT.”

As the notary had proceeded with the reading of the testament, Gabriel was successively agitated by divers painful impressions. At first, as we have before said, he was struck with the singular fatality which restored this immense fortune, derived from a victim of the Society of Jesus, to the hands of that very association by the renewal of his deed of gift. Then, as his charitable and lofty soul began fully to comprehend the admirable tendency of the association so earnestly recommended by Marius de Rennepont, he reflected with bitter remorse that, in consequence of his act of renunciation and of the absence of any other heir, this great idea would never be realized, and a fortune far more considerable than had even been expected would fall to the share of an ill-omened society, in whose hands it would become a terrible means of action.

At the same time it must be said that the soul of Gabriel was too pure and noble to feel the slightest personal regret on hearing the great probable value of the property he had renounced. He rejoiced rather in withdrawing his mind, by a touching contrast, from the thought of the wealth he had abandoned to the humble parsonage, where he hoped to pass the remainder of his life in the practice of piety and every evangelical virtue.

These ideas passed confusedly through his brain. The sight of that woman's portrait, the dark revelations contained in the testament, the grandeur of the views exhibited in this last will of M. de Rennepont,—all these extraordinary incidents had thrown Gabriel into a sort of stupor, in which he was still plunged when Samuel offered the key of the register to the notary, saying:

"You will find, sir, in this register the exact statement of the sums in my possession, derived from the investment and accumulation of the one hundred and fifty thousand francs intrusted to my grandfather by M. Marius de Rennepont."

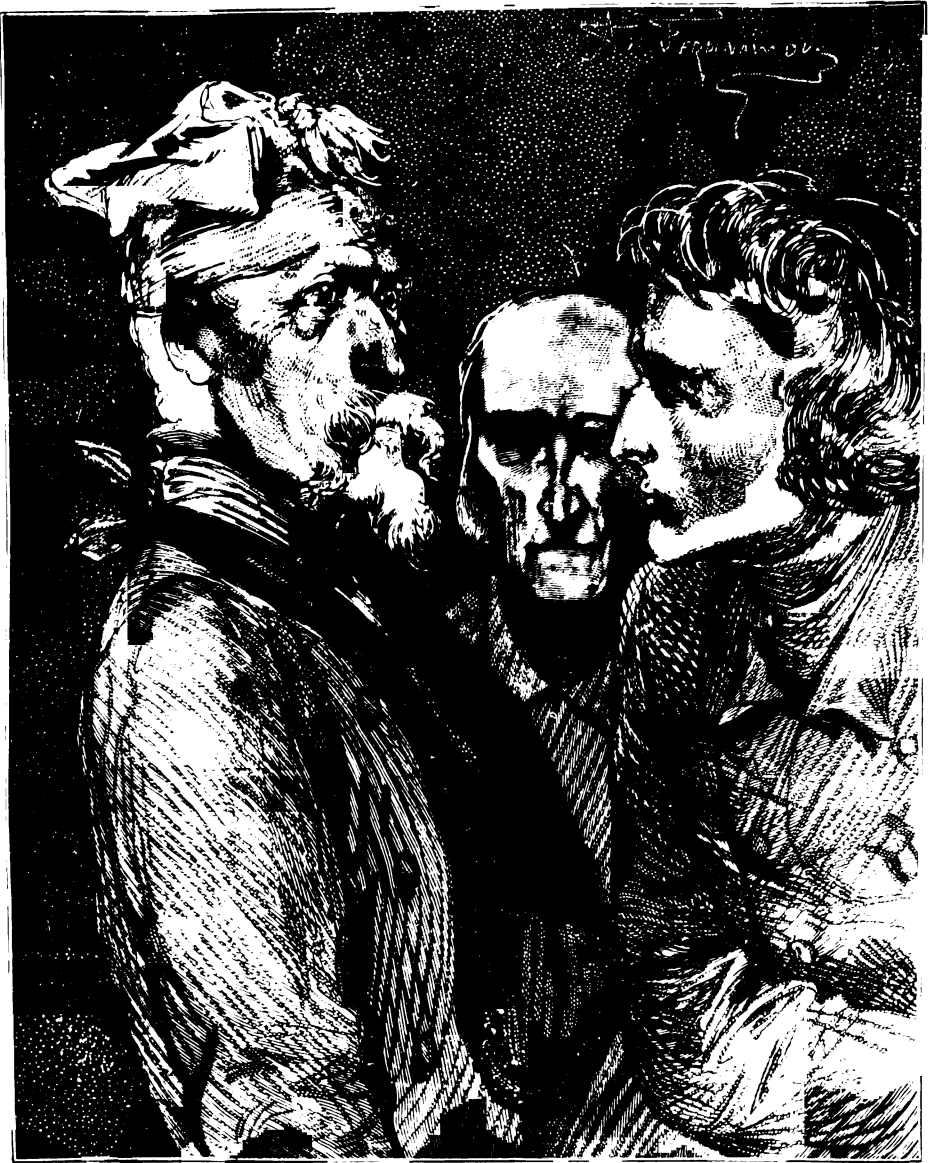
"Your grandfather!" cried Father d'Aigrigny, with the utmost surprise; "it is, then, your family that has always had the management of this property"

"Yes, sir; and, in a few minutes, my wife will bring hither the casket which contains the vouchers."

"And to what sum does this property amount?" asked Rodin, with an air of the most complete indifference.

"As the notary may convince himself by this statement," replied Samuel, with perfect frankness, and as if he were only talking of the original one hundred and fifty thousand francs, "I have in my possession various current securities to the amount of two hundred and twelve millions one hundred and seventy —"

"What do you say, sir?" cried Father d'Aigrigny, without giving Samuel time to finish, for the odd money did not at all interest his reverence



"Yes, the sum!" added Rodin, in an agitated voice, and, for the first time, perhaps, in his life, losing his presence of mind; "the sum—the sum—the sum!"

"I say, sir," resumed the old man, "that I hold securities for two

hundred and twelve millions one hundred and seventy-five thousand francs, payable to self or bearer—as you may soon convince yourself, notary, for here is my wife with the casket.”

At this moment Bathsheba entered, holding in her arms the cedar-wood chest which contained the securities in question; she placed it upon the table and withdrew, after exchanging an affectionate glance with Samuel.

When the latter declared the enormous amount of the sum in hand, his words were received with silent stupor. All the actors in this scene, except himself, believed that they were the sport of some delusion.

Father d'Aigrigny and Rodin had counted upon forty millions. This sum, in itself enormous, was more than quintupled.

Gabriel, when he heard the notary read those passages in the testament which spoke of a princely fortune, being quite ignorant of the prodigious effects of *eligible investments*, had valued the property at some three or four millions. He was, therefore, struck dumb with amazement at the exorbitant amount named. Notwithstanding his admirable disinterestedness and scrupulous honor, he felt dazzled and giddy at the thought that all these immense riches might have belonged to him—alone.

The notary, almost as much amazed as Gabriel, examined the statement, and could hardly believe his eyes. The Jew also remained mute, and seemed painfully absorbed in thought, that no other heir made his appearance.

In the depth of this profound silence, the clock in the next room began slowly to strike twelve. Samuel started and heaved a deep sigh. A few seconds more and the fatal term would be at an end.

Rodin, Father d'Aigrigny, Gabriel, and the notary were all under the influence of such complete surprise that not one of them even remarked how strange it was to hear the sound of this clock.

“Noon!” cried Rodin, as, by an involuntary movement, he hastily placed his two hands upon the casket, as if to take possession of it.

“At last!” cried Father d'Aigrigny, with an expression of joy, triumph, transport, which it is impossible to describe. Then he added, as he threw himself into Gabriel's arms, whom he embraced warmly: “Oh, my dear son! how the poor will bless you! You will be a second Vincent de Paul. You will be canonized, I promise you.”

“Let us first thank Providence,” said Rodin, in a grave and solemn tone, as he fell upon his knees, “let us thank Providence that He has permitted so much wealth to be employed for His glory!”

Father d'Aigrigny, having again embraced Gabriel, took him by the

hand, and said: "Rodin is right. Let us kneel, my dear son, and render thanks to Providence!"

So saying, Father d'Aigrigny knelt down, dragging Gabriel with him, and the latter, confused and giddy with so many precipitate events, yielded mechanically to the impulse. It was the last stroke of twelve when they all rose together

Then said the notary, in a slightly agitated voice, for there was something extraordinary and solemn in this scene:

"No other heir of M. Marius de Rennepont having presented himself, before noon on this day, I execute the will of the testator, by declaring, in the name of law and justice, that M. François Marie Gabriel de Rennepont, here present, is the sole heir and possessor of all the estate, real and personal, bequeathed under the said will; all which estate the said Gabriel de Rennepont, priest, has freely and voluntarily made over by deed of gift to Frederic Emanuel de Bordeville, Marquis d'Aigrigny, priest, who has accepted the same, and is, therefore, the only legal holder of such property, in the room of the said Gabriel de Rennepont, by virtue of the said deed, drawn up and engrossed by me this morning, and signed in my presence by the said Gabriel de Rennepont and Frederic d'Aigrigny"

At this moment the sound of loud voices was heard from the garden. Bathsheba entered hastily, and said to her husband with an agitated air:

"Samuel — a soldier — who insists —"

She had not time to finish. Dagobert appeared at the door of the Red Room. The soldier was fearfully pale. He seemed almost fainting; his left arm was in a sling, and he leaned upon Agricola. At sight of Dagobert, the pale and flabby eyelids of Rodin were suddenly distended, as if all the blood in his body had flowed toward the head.

Then the *Socius* threw himself upon the casket, with the haste of ferocious rage and avidity, as if he were resolved to cover it with his body and defend it at the peril of his life.

CHAPTER IX

THE DEED OF GIFT

FATHER D'AIGRIGNY did not recognize Dagobert and had never seen Agricola. He could not, therefore, at first explain the kind of angry alarm exhibited by Rodin. But the reverend father understood it all, when he heard Gabriel utter a cry of joy and saw him rush into the arms of the smith, exclaiming: "My brother! my second father — oh! it is Heaven that sends you to me."

Having pressed Gabriel's hand, Dagobert advanced toward Father d'Aigrigny, with a rapid but unsteady step. As he remarked the soldier's threatening countenance, the reverend father, strong in his acquired rights, and feeling that, since noon, he was at home here, drew back a little and said imperiously to the veteran: "Who are you, sir! — What do you want here?"

Instead of answering, the soldier continued to advance; then, stopping just facing Father d'Aigrigny, he looked at him for a second with such an astounding mixture of curiosity, disdain, aversion, and audacity, that the ex-colonel of hussars quailed before the pale face and glowing eye of the veteran.

The notary and Samuel, struck with surprise, remained mute spectators of this scene, while Agricola and Gabriel followed with anxiety Dagobert's least movements.

As for Rodin, he pretended to be leaning on the casket, in order still to cover it with his body.

Surmounting at length the embarrassment caused by the steadfast look of the soldier, Father d'Aigrigny raised his head and repeated: "I ask you, sir, who you are, and what you want?"

"Do you not recognize me?" said Dagobert, hardly able to restrain himself.

"No, sir —"

"In truth," returned the soldier, with profound contempt, "you cast

down your eyes for shame, when, at Leipsic, you fought for the Russians against the French, and when General Simon, covered with wounds, answered you, renegade that you were, when you asked him for his sword, 'I do not surrender to a traitor!' and dragged himself along to one of the Russian grenadiers, to whom he yielded up his weapon. Well! there was then a wounded soldier by the side of General Simon—I am he."

"In brief, sir, what do you want?" said Father d'Aigrigny, hardly able to control himself.

"I have come to unmask you—you, that are as false and hateful a priest as Gabriel is admirable and beloved by all."

"Sir!" cried the marquis, becoming livid with rage and emotion.

"I tell you that you are infamous," resumed the soldier, with still greater force. "To rob Marshal Simon's daughters and Gabriel and Mademoiselle de Cardoville of their inheritance, you have had recourse to the most shameful means."

"What do you say?" cried Gabriel. "The daughters of Marshal Simon?"

"Are your relations, my dear boy, as is also that worthy Mademoiselle de Cardoville, the benefactress of Agricola. Now, this priest," he added, pointing to Father d'Aigrigny, "has had them shut up—the one as mad, in a lunatic asylum; the others in a convent. As for you, my dear boy, I did not hope to find you here, believing that they would have prevented you, like the others, from coming hither this morning. But, thank God, you are here, and I arrive in time. I should have been sooner but for my wound. I have lost so much blood that I have done nothing but faint all the morning."

"Truly!" cried Gabriel, with uneasiness. "I had not remarked your arm in a sling. What is the wound?"

At a sign from Agricola, Dagobert answered: "Nothing; the consequence of a fall. But here I am, to unveil many infamies."

It is impossible to paint the curiosity, anguish, surprise, or fear of the different actors in this scene, as they listened to Dagobert's threatening words. But the most overcome was Gabriel. His angelic countenance was distorted, his knees trembled under him. Struck by the communication of Dagobert, which revealed the existence of other heirs, he was unable to speak for some time, but at length he cried out, in a tone of despair: "And it is I—oh, God! I—who am the cause of the spoliation of this family!"

"You, brother?" exclaimed Agricola.

"Did they not wish to rob you also?" added Dagobert.

"The will," cried Gabriel, with increasing agony, "gave the property to those of the heirs that should appear before noon."

"Well?" said Dagobert, alarmed at the emotion of the young priest.

"Twelve o'clock has struck," resumed the latter. "Of all the family, I alone was present. Do you understand it now? The term is expired. The heirs have been thrust aside by me!"

"By you!" said Dagobert, stammering with joy "By you, my brave boy! then all is well."

"But ——"

"All is well," resumed Dagobert, radiant with delight. "You will share with the others—I know you."

"But all this property I have irrevocably made over to another," cried Gabriel in despair

"Made over the property!" cried Dagobert, quite petrified. "To whom, then?—to whom?"

"To this gentleman," said Gabriel, pointing to Father d'Aigrigny.

"To *him*!" exclaimed Dagobert, overwhelmed by the news; "to *him*—the renegade—who has always been the evil genius of this family!"

"But, brother," cried Agricola, "did you then know your claim to this inheritance?"

"No," answered the young priest, with deep dejection; "no—I only learned it this morning from Father d'Aigrigny. He told me that he had only recently been informed of my rights, by family papers long ago found upon me, and sent by our mother to her confessor."

A sudden light seemed to dawn upon the mind of the smith as he exclaimed: "I understand it all now. They discovered in these papers that you would one day have a chance of becoming rich. Therefore, they interested themselves about you; therefore, they took you into their college, where we could never see you; therefore, they deceived you in your vocation by shameful falsehoods, to force you to become a priest and to lead you to make this deed of gift. Oh, sir!" resumed Agricola, turning toward Father d'Aigrigny with indignation, "my father is right—such machinations are indeed infamous!"

During this scene the reverend father and his *Socius*, at first alarmed and shaken in their audacity, had by degrees recovered all their coolness. Rodin, still leaning upon the casket, had said a few words in a low voice to Father d'Aigrigny. So that when Agricola, carried away by his indignation, reproached the latter with his infamous machinations, he bowed his head humbly and answered: "We are bound to forgive injuries, and offer them to the Lord as a mark of our humility."

Dagobert, confounded at all he had just heard, felt his reason begin to wander. After so much anxiety his strength failed beneath this new and terrible blow.

Agricola's just and sensible words, in connection with certain passages of the will, at once enlightened Gabriel as to the views of Father d'Aigrigny in taking charge of his education and leading him to join the Society of Jesus. For the first time in his life Gabriel was able to take in at a glance all the secret springs of the dark intrigue of which he had been the victim. Then, indignation and despair surmounting his natural timidity, the missionary, with flashing eye and cheeks inflamed with noble wrath, exclaimed, as he addressed Father d'Aigrigny:

"So, father, when you placed me in one of your colleges it was not from any feeling of kindness or commiseration, but only in the hope of bringing me one day to renounce in favor of your Order my share in this inheritance; and it did not even suffice you to sacrifice me to your cupidity, but I must also be rendered the involuntary instrument of a shameful spoliation! If only I were concerned, if you only coveted my claim to all this wealth, I should not complain. I am the minister of a religion which honors and sanctifies poverty; I have consented to the donation in your favor, and I have not, I could never have any claim upon it. But property is concerned which belongs to poor orphans, brought from a distant exile by my adopted father, and I will not see *them* wronged. But the benefactress of my adopted brother is concerned, and I will not see *her* wronged. But the last will of a dying man is concerned, who, in his ardent love of humanity, bequeathed to his descendants an evangelic mission—an admirable mission of progress, love, union, liberty—and I will not see this mission blighted in its bud: No, no; I tell you, this mission shall be accomplished, though I have to cancel the donation I have made."

On these words, Father d'Aigrigny and Rodin looked at each other with a slight shrug of the shoulders. At a sign from the *Socius*, the reverend father began to speak with immovable calmness, in a slow and sanctified voice, keeping his eyes constantly cast down:

"There are many incidents connected with this inheritance of M. de Rennepont which appear very complicated, many phantoms which seem unusually menacing, and yet, nothing could be really more simple and natural. Let us proceed in regular order. Let us put aside all these calumnious imputations; we will return to them afterward. M. Gabriel de Rennepont,—and I humbly beg him to contradict me if I depart in the least instance from the exact truth,—M. Gabriel de Rennepont, in acknowledgment of the care formerly bestowed on him by the society to which I have the honor to belong, made over to me, as its representative, freely and voluntarily, all the property that might come to him one day, the value of which was unknown to him, as well as to myself."

Father d'Aigrigny here looked at Gabriel, as if appealing to him for the truth of this statement.

"It is true," said the young priest; "I made this donation freely."

"This morning, in consequence of a private conversation, which I will not repeat—and in this I am certain beforehand of the Abbé Gabriel ——"

"True," replied Gabriel generously; "the subject of this conversation is of little importance."

"It was then, in consequence of this conversation, that the Abbé Gabriel manifested the desire to confirm this donation—not in my favor, for I have little to do with earthly wealth, but in favor of the sacred and charitable works of which our Company is the trustee. I appeal to the honor of M. Gabriel to declare if he have not engaged himself toward us, not only by a solemn oath, but by a perfectly legal act, executed in presence of M. Dumesnil, here present?"

"It is all true," answered Gabriel.

"The deed was prepared by me," added the notary.

"But Gabriel could only give you what belonged to him," cried Dagobert. "The dear boy never supposed that you would make use of him to rob other people."

"Do me the favor, sir, to allow me to explain myself," replied Father d'Aigrigny courteously; "you can afterward make answer."

Dagobert repressed with difficulty his painful impatience. The reverend father continued:

"The Abbé Gabriel has therefore, by the double engagement of an oath and a legal act, confirmed his donation. Much more," resumed Father d'Aigrigny; "when to his great astonishment and to ours, the enormous amount of the inheritance became known, the Abbé Gabriel, faithful to his own admirable generosity, far from repenting of his gifts, consecrated them once more by a pious movement of gratitude to Providence—for M. Notary will doubtless remember that, after embracing the Abbé Gabriel with transport, and telling him that he was a second Vincent de Paul in charity, I took him by the hand, and we both knelt down together, to thank Heaven for having inspired him with the thought to offer these immense riches to the Greater Glory of the Lord."

"That is true, also," answered Gabriel honestly; "so long as I only was concerned, though I might be astounded for a moment by the revelation of so enormous a fortune, I did not think for an instant of canceling the donation I had freely made."

"Under these circumstances," resumed Father d'Aigrigny, "the hour fixed for the settlement of the inheritance having struck, and Abbé



THE CODICIL TO THE WILL.

Gabriel being the only heir that presented himself, he became necessarily the only legitimate possessor of this immense wealth—enormous, no doubt—and charity makes me rejoice that it is enormous; for, thanks to it, many miseries will be relieved and many tears wiped away. But, all on a sudden, here comes this gentleman,” said Father d’Aigrigny, pointing to Dagobert, “and under some delusion, which I forgive from the bottom of my soul, and which I am sure he will himself regret, accuses me, with insults and threats, with having carried off—I know not where—some persons—I know not whom—in order to prevent their being here at the proper time ——”

“Yes, I accuse you of this infamy!” cried the soldier, exasperated by the calmness and audacity of the reverend father; “yes, and I will ——”

“Once again, sir, I conjure you to be so good as to let me finish; you can reply afterward,” said Father d’Aigrigny humbly, in the softest and most honeyed accents.

“Yes, I will reply, and confound you!” cried Dagobert.

“Let him finish, father; you can speak presently,” said Agricola.

The soldier was silent as Father d’Aigrigny continued, with new assurance: “Doubtless, if there should really be any other heirs besides the Abbé Gabriel, it is unfortunate for them that they have not appeared in proper time. And if, instead of defending the cause of the poor and needy, I had only to look to my own interest, I should be far from availing myself of this advantage, due only to chance; but as a trustee for the great family of the poor, I am obliged to maintain my absolute right to this inheritance; and I do not doubt that the notary will acknowledge the validity of my claim, and deliver to me those securities, which are now my legitimate property.”

“My only mission,” replied the notary, in an agitated voice, “is faithfully to execute the will of the testator. The Abbé Gabriel de Rennepont alone presented himself within the term fixed by the testament. The deed of gift is in due form; I cannot refuse, therefore, to deliver to the person named in the deed the amount of the heritage ——”

On these words Samuel hid his face in his hands and heaved a deep sigh; he was obliged to acknowledge the rigorous justice of the notary’s observations.

“But, sir,” cried Dagobert, addressing the man of law, “this cannot be. You will not allow two poor orphans to be despoiled. It is in the name of their father and mother that I speak to you. I give you my honor—the honor of a soldier—that they took advantage of the weakness of my wife to carry the daughters of Marshal Simon to a convent, and thus prevent me bringing them here this morning. It is so true that I have already laid my charge before a magistrate.”

"And what answer did you receive?" said the notary.

"That my deposition was not sufficient for the law to remove these young girls from the convent in which they were, and that inquiries would be made ——"

"Yes, sir," added Agricola, "and it was the same with regard to Mademoiselle de Carloville, detained as mad in a lunatic asylum, though in the full enjoyment of her reason. Like Marshal Simon's daughters, she too has a claim to this inheritance. I took the same steps for her as my father took for Marshal Simon's daughters."

"Well?" asked the notary.

"Unfortunately, sir," answered Agricola, "they told me, as they did my father, that my deposition would not suffice, and that they must make inquiries."

At this moment Bathsheba, having heard the street-bell ring, left the Red Room at a sign from Samuel.

The notary resumed, addressing Agricola and his father: "Far be it from me, gentlemen, to call in question your good faith; but I cannot, to my great regret, attach such importance to your accusations, which are not supported by proof, as to suspend the regular legal course. According to your own confession, gentlemen, the authorities to whom you addressed yourselves did not see fit to interfere on your depositions, and told you they would inquire further. Now, really, gentlemen, I appeal to you; how can I, in so serious a matter, take upon myself a responsibility which the magistrates themselves have refused to take?"

"Yes, you should do so, in the name of justice and honor!" cried Dagobert.

"It may be so, sir, in your opinion; but, in my view of the case, I remain faithful to justice and honor by executing with exactness the last will of the dead. For the rest you have no occasion to despair. If the persons whose interests you represent consider themselves injured, they may hereafter have recourse to an action at law against the person acting as *donee* of the Abbé Gabriel. But in the mean while it is my duty to put him in immediate possession of the securities. I should be gravely imperiled were I to act in any other manner."

The notary's observations seemed so reasonable that Samuel, Dagobert, and Agricola were quite confounded. After a moment's thought, Gabriel appeared to take a desperate resolution, and said to the notary in a firm voice:

"Since, under these circumstances, the law is powerless to obtain the right, I must adopt, sir, an extreme course. Before doing so, I will ask M. l'Abbé d'Aigrigny, for the last time, if he will content himself with

that portion of the property which falls justly to me, on condition that the rest shall be placed in safe hands till the heirs whose names have been brought forward shall prove their claim?"

"To this proposition I must answer as I have done already," replied Father d'Aigrigny; "it is not I who am concerned, but an immense work of charity. I am, therefore, obliged to refuse the offer of the Abbé Gabriel and to remind him of his engagements of every kind."

"Then you refuse this arrangement?" asked Gabriel, in an agitated voice.

"Charity commands me to do so."

"You refuse it—absolutely?"

"I think of all the good and pious institutions that these treasures will enable us to establish for the Greater Glory of the Lord, and I have neither the courage nor the desire to make the least concession."

"Then, sir," resumed the good priest, in a still more agitated manner, "since you force me to it, I revoke my donation. I only intended to dispose of my own property, and not of that which did not belong to me."

"Take care, M. l'Abbé," said Father d'Aigrigny; "I would observe that I hold in my hand a written, formal promise."

"I know it, sir; you have a written paper, in which I take an oath never to revoke this donation, upon any pretext whatever, and on pain of incurring the aversion and contempt of all honest men. Well, sir! be it so," said Gabriel, with deep bitterness; "I will expose myself to all the consequences of perjury; you may proclaim it everywhere. I may be hated and despised by all—but God will judge me!"

The young priest dried a tear, which trickled from his eye.

"Oh! do not be afraid, my dear boy!" cried Dagobert, with reviving hope. "All honest men will be on your side!"

"Well done, brother!" said Agricola.

"Notary," said Rodin, in his little sharp voice, "please to explain to Abbé Gabriel that he may perjure himself as much as he thinks fit, but that the Civil Code is much less easy to violate than a mere promise, which is only—sacred!"

"Speak, sir," said Gabriel.

"Please to inform Abbé Gabriel," resumed Rodin, "that a deed of gift like that made in favor of Father d'Aigrigny can only be canceled for one of three reasons—is it not so?"

"Yes, sir, for three reasons," said the notary.

"The first is in case of the birth of a child," said Rodin, "and I should blush to mention such a contingency to the Abbé Gabriel. The second is the ingratitude of the *donce*—and the Abbé Gabriel may be

certain of our deep and lasting gratitude. The last case is the non-fulfillment of the wishes of the *donor*, with regard to the employment of his gifts. Now, although Abbé Gabriel may have suddenly conceived a very bad opinion of us, he will at least give us some time to show that his gifts have been disposed of according to his wishes, and applied to the *Greater Glory of God*."

"Now, notary," added Father d'Aigrigny, "it is for you to decide and say if Abbé Gabriel *can* revoke the donation he has made."

Just as the notary was going to answer, Bathsheba reëntered the room, followed by two more personages, who appeared in the Red Room at a little distance from each other.

CHAPTER X

A GOOD GENIUS

THE first of the two whose arrival had interrupted the answer of the notary was Faringhea.

At sight of this man's forbidding countenance, Samuel approached, and said to him: "Who are you, sir?"

After casting a piercing glance at Rodin, who started, but soon recovered his habitual coolness, Faringhea replied to Samuel: "Prince Djalma arrived lately from India, in order to be present here this day, as it was recommended to him by an inscription on a medal which he wore about his neck."

"He, also!" cried Gabriel, who had been the shipmate of the Indian prince from the Azores, where the vessel in which he came from Alexandria had been driven into port; "he also one of the heirs! In fact, the prince told me during the voyage that his mother was of French origin. But, doubtless, he thought it right to conceal from me the object of his journey. Oh! that Indian is a noble and courageous young man. Where is he?"

The Strangler again looked at Rodin, and said, laying strong emphasis upon his words: "I left the prince yesterday evening. He informed me that, although he had a great interest to be here, he might possibly sacrifice that interest to other motives. I passed the night in the same hotel, and this morning, when I went to call on him, they told me he was already gone out. My friendship for him led me to come hither, hoping the information I should be able to give might be of use to the prince."

In making no mention of the snare into which he had fallen the day before, in concealing Rodin's machinations with regard to Djalma, and in attributing the absence of this latter to a voluntary cause, the Strangler evidently wished to serve the *Socius*, trusting that Rodin would know how to recompense his discretion.

It is useless to observe that all this story was impudently false. Having succeeded that morning in escaping from his prison by a prodigious effort of cunning, audacity, and skill, he had run to the hotel

where he had left Djalma. There he had learned that a man and woman, of an advanced age and most respectable appearance, calling themselves relations of the young Indian, had asked to see him; and that, alarmed at the dangerous state of somnolency in which he seemed to be plunged, they had taken him home in their carriage, in order to pay him the necessary attention.

"It is unfortunate," said the notary, "that this heir also did not make his appearance; but he has, unhappily, forfeited his right to the immense inheritance that is in question."

"Oh! an immense inheritance is in question," said Faringhea, looking fixedly at Rodin, who prudently turned away his eyes.

The second of the two personages we have mentioned entered at this moment. It was the father of Marshal Simon, an old man of tall stature, still active and vigorous for his age. His hair was white and thin. His countenance, rather fresh-colored, was expressive at once of quickness, mildness, and energy.

Agricola advanced hastily to meet him. "You here, M. Simon!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, my boy," said the marshal's father, cordially pressing Agricola's hand; "I have just arrived from my journey. M. Hardy was to have been here about some matter of inheritance, as he supposed; but, as he will still be absent from Paris for some time, he has charged me ——"

"He also an heir! — M. François Hardy!" cried Agricola, interrupting the old workman.

"But how pale and agitated you are, my boy!" said the marshal's father, looking round with astonishment. "What is the matter?"

"What is the matter!" cried Dagobert in despair, as he approached the foreman. "The matter is, that they would rob your granddaughters, and that I have brought them from the depths of Siberia only to witness this shameful deed!"

"Eh?" cried the old workman, trying to recognize the soldier's face, "you are then ——"

"Dagobert."

"You, the generous, devoted friend of my son!" cried the marshal's father, pressing the hands of Dagobert in his own with strong emotion; "but did you not speak of Simon's daughter?"

"Of his daughters; for he is more fortunate than he imagines," said Dagobert. "The poor children are twins."

"And where are they?" asked the old man.

"In a convent."

"In a convent?"

"Yes, by the treachery of this man, who keeps them there in order to disinherit them."

"What man?"



"The Marquis d'Aigrigny"

"My son's mortal enemy!" cried the old workman, as he threw a glance of aversion at Father d'Aigrigny, whose audacity did not fail him.

"And that is not all," added Agricola. "M. Hardy, my worthy and excellent master, has also lost his right to this immense inheritance."

"What?" cried Marshal Simon's father; "but M. Hardy did not know that such important interests were concerned. He set out hastily to join one of his friends who was in want of him."

At each of these successive revelations, Samuel felt his trouble increase; but he could only sigh over it, for the will of the testator was couched, unhappily, in precise and positive terms.

Father d'Aigrigny, impatient to end this scene, which caused him cruel embarrassment, in spite of his apparent calmness, said to the notary, in a grave and expressive voice:

"It is necessary sir, that all this should have an end. If calumny could reach me, I would answer victoriously by the facts that have just come to light. Why attribute to odious conspiracies the absence of the heirs, in whose names this soldier and his son have so uncourteously urged their demands? Why should such absence be less explicable than the young Indian's, or than M. Hardy's, who, as his confidential man has just told us, did not even know the importance of the interests that called him hither? Is it not probable that the daughters of Marshal Simon and Mademoiselle de Cardoville have been prevented from coming here to-day by some very natural reasons? But, once again, this has lasted too long. I think the notary will agree with me that this discovery of new heirs does not at all affect the question which I had the honor to propose to him just now; namely, whether, as trustee for the poor, to whom Abbé Gabriel made a free gift of all he possessed, I remain, notwithstanding his tardy and illegal opposition, the only possessor of this property, which I have promised, and which I now again promise, in presence of all here assembled, to employ for the Greater Glory of God? Please to answer me plainly, M. Notary, and thus terminate a scene which must needs be painful to us all."

"Sir," replied the notary, in a solemn tone, "on my soul and conscience, and in the name of law and justice, as a faithful and impartial executor of the last will of M. Marius de Rennepont, I declare that, by virtue of the deed of gift of Abbé Gabriel de Rennepont, you, M. l'Abbé d'Aigrigny, are the only possessor of this property, which I place at your immediate disposal, that you may employ the same according to the intention of the donor."

These words, pronounced with conviction and gravity, destroyed the last vague hopes that the representatives of the heirs might till then have entertained. Samuel became paler than usual, and pressed convulsively the hand of Bathsheba, who had drawn near to him. Large tears rolled down the cheeks of the two old people.

Dagobert and Agricola were plunged into the deepest dejection. Struck with the reasoning of the notary, who refused to give more credence and authority to their remonstrances than the magistrates had done before him, they saw themselves forced to abandon every hope. But Gabriel suffered more than any one; he felt the most terrible remorse, in reflecting that, by his blindness, he had been the involuntary cause and instrument of this abominable robbery.

So, when the notary, after having examined and verified the amount of securities contained in the cedar-wood box, said to Father d'Aigrigny, "Take possession, sir, of this casket——" Gabriel exclaimed, with bitter disappointment and profound despair: "Alas! one would fancy, under these circumstances, that an inexorable fatality pursues all those who are worthy of interest, affection, or respect. Oh, my God!" added the young priest, clasping his hands with fervor, "thy sovereign justice will never permit the triumph of such iniquity!"

It was as if Heaven had listened to the prayer of the missionary. Hardly had he spoken, when a strange event took place.

Without waiting for the end of Gabriel's invocation, Rodin, profiting by the decision of the notary, had seized the casket in his arms, unable to repress a deep sigh of joy and triumph. At the very moment when Father d'Aigrigny and his *Socius* thought themselves at last in safe possession of the treasure, the door of the apartment in which the clock had been heard striking was suddenly opened.

A woman appeared upon the threshold.

At sight of her Gabriel uttered a loud cry, and remained as if thunderstruck. Samuel and Bathsheba fell on their knees together, and raised their clasped hands. The Jew and Jewess felt inexplicable hopes reviving within them.

All the other actors in the scene appeared struck with stupor. Rodin—Rodin himself—recoiled two steps and replaced the casket on the table with a trembling hand.

Though the incident might appear natural enough,—a woman appearing on the threshold of a door which she had just thrown open,—there was a pause of deep and solemn silence. Every bosom seemed oppressed, and as if struggling for breath. All experienced at sight of this woman surprise mingled with fear, and indefinable anxiety—for this woman was the living original of the portrait which had been placed in the room a hundred and fifty years ago.

The same head-dress, the same flowing robe, the same countenance, so full of poignant and resigned grief!

She advanced slowly and without appearing to perceive the deep impression she had caused. She approached one of the pieces of furniture inlaid with brass, touched a spring concealed in the molding of

gilded bronze so that an upper drawer flew open, and taking from it a sealed parchment envelope, she walked up to the table and placed this packet before the notary, who, hitherto silent and motionless, received it mechanically from her.

Then, casting upon Gabriel, who seemed fascinated by her presence, a long, mild, melancholy look, this woman directed her steps toward the hall, the door of which had remained open. As she passed near Samuel and Bathsheba, who were still kneeling, she stopped an instant, bowed her fair head toward them, and looked at them with tender solicitude. Then, giving them her hands to kiss, she glided away as slowly as she had entered, throwing a last glance upon Gabriel.

The departure of this woman seemed to break the spell under which all present had remained for the last few minutes. Gabriel was the first to speak, exclaiming in an agitated voice: "It is she—again—here—in this house!"

"Who, brother?" said Agricola, uneasy at the pale and almost wild looks of the missionary; for the smith had not yet remarked the strange resemblance of the woman to the portrait, though he shared in the general feeling of amazement, without being able to explain it to himself. Dagobert and Faringhea were in a similar state of mind.

"Who is this woman?" resumed Agricola, as he took the hand of Gabriel, which felt damp and icy cold.

"Look!" said the young priest. "Those portraits have been there for more than a century and a half."

He pointed to the paintings, before which he was now seated, and Agricola, Dagobert, and Faringhea raised their eyes to either side of the fireplace.

Three exclamations were now heard at once.

"It is she—it is the same woman!" cried the smith, in amazement; "and her portrait has been here for a hundred and fifty years!"

"What do I see?" cried Dagobert, as he gazed at the portrait of the man. "The friend and emissary of Marshal Simon. Yes! it is the same face that I saw last year in Siberia. Oh, yes! I recognize that wild and sorrowful air—those black eyebrows, which make only one!"

"My eyes do not deceive me," muttered Faringhea to himself, shuddering with horror. "It is the same man, with the black mark on his forehead, that we strangled and buried on the banks of the Ganges—the same man that one of the sons of Bowanee told me, in the ruins of Tchandi, had been met by him afterward at one of the gates of Bombay—the man of the fatal curse, who scatters death upon his passage—and his picture has existed for a hundred and fifty years!"

And, like Dagobert and Agricola, the Strangler could not withdraw his eyes from that strange portrait.

"What a mysterious resemblance!" thought Father d'Aigrigny. Then, as if struck with a sudden idea, he said to Gabriel: "But this woman is the same that saved your life in America?"

"It is the same," answered Gabriel, with emotion; "and yet she told me she was going toward the North," added the young priest, speaking to himself.

"But how came she in this house?" said Father d'Aigrigny, addressing Samuel. "Answer me! did this woman come in with you, or before you?"

"I came in first, and alone, when this door was first opened since a century and a half," said Samuel gravely.

"Then how can you explain the presence of this woman here?" said Father d'Aigrigny.

"I do not try to explain it," said the Jew. "I see, I believe, and now I hope," added he, looking at Bathsheba with an indefinable expression.

"But you ought to explain the presence of this woman!" said Father d'Aigrigny, with vague uneasiness. "Who is she! How came she hither?"

"All I know is, sir, that my father has often told me there are subterraneous communications between this house and distant parts of the quarter."

"Oh! then nothing can be clearer," said Father d'Aigrigny; "it only remains to be known what this woman intends by coming hither. As for her singular resemblance to this portrait, it is one of the freaks of nature."

Rodin had shared in the general emotion, at the apparition of this mysterious woman. But when he saw that she had delivered a sealed packet to the notary, the *Socius*, instead of thinking of the strangeness of this unexpected vision, was only occupied with a violent desire to quit the house with the treasure which had just fallen to the Company. He felt a vague anxiety at sight of the envelope with the black seal, which the protectress of Gabriel had delivered to the notary and was still held mechanically in his hands. The *Socius*, therefore, judging this a very good opportunity to walk off with the casket, during the general silence and stupor which still continued, slightly touched Father d'Aigrigny's elbow, made him a sign of intelligence, and, tucking the cedar-wood chest under his arm, was hastening toward the door.

"One moment, sir," said Samuel, rising, and standing in his path; "I request the notary to examine the envelope that has just been delivered to him. You may then go out."

"But, sir," said Rodin, trying to force a passage, "the question is definitively decided in favor of Father d'Aigrigny. Therefore, with your permission —"

"I tell you, sir," answered the old man, in a loud voice, "that this casket *shall* not leave the house until the notary has examined the envelope just delivered to him."

These words drew the attention of all. Rodin was forced to retrace his steps. Notwithstanding the firmness of his character, the Jew shuddered at the look of implacable hate which Rodin turned upon him at this moment.

Yielding to the wish of Samuel, the notary examined the envelope with attention. "Good Heaven!" he cried suddenly; "what do I see?—Ah, so much the better!"

At this exclamation, all eyes turned upon the notary. "Oh! read, read, sir!" cried Samuel, clasping his hands together. "My presentiments have not then deceived me!"

"But, sir," said Father d'Aigrigny to the notary, for he began to share in the anxiety of Rodin, "what is this paper?"

"A codicil," answered the notary; "a codicil which re-opens the whole question."

"How, sir?" cried Father d'Aigrigny, in a fury, as he hastily drew nearer to the notary; "re-opens the whole question! By what right?"

"It is impossible," added Rodin. "We protest against it."

"Gabriel! father! listen," cried Agricola, "all is not lost. There is yet hope. Do you hear, Gabriel. There is yet hope."

"What do you say?" exclaimed the young priest, rising, and hardly believing the words of his adopted brother.

"Gentlemen," said the notary, "I will read to you the superscription of this envelope. It changes, or rather, it adjourns the whole of the testamentary provisions."

"Gabriel!" cried Agricola, throwing himself on the neck of the missionary, "all is adjourned; nothing is lost!"

"Listen, gentlemen," said the notary; and he read as follows:

" 'This is a codicil which, for reasons herein stated, adjourns and prorogues to the first day of June, 1832, though without any other change, all the provisions contained in the testament made by me at one o'clock this afternoon. The house shall be reclosed and the funds left in the hands of the same trustee, to be distributed to the rightful claimants on the 1st of June, 1832.

" 'Villetaneuse, this 13th of February, 1682, eleven o'clock at night.

" 'MARIUS DE RENNEPONT.' "

"I protest against this codicil as a forgery!" cried Father d'Aigrigny, livid with rage and despair.

"The woman who delivered it to the notary is a suspicious character," added Rodin. "The codicil has been forged."

"No, sir," said the notary severely; "I have just compared the two signatures and they are absolutely alike. For the rest, what I said this

morning with regard to the absent heirs is now applicable to you,—the law is open; you may dispute the authenticity of this codicil. Meanwhile, everything will remain suspended, since the term for the adjustment of the inheritance is prolonged for three months and a half."

When the notary had uttered these last words, Rodin's nails dripped blood; for the first time his wan lips became red.

"Oh, God! thou hast heard and granted my prayer!" cried Gabriel, kneeling down with religious fervor and turning his angelic face toward heaven. "Thy sovereign justice has not let iniquity triumph!"

"What do you say, my brave boy?" cried Dagobert, who in the first tumult of joy had not exactly understood the meaning of the codicil.

"All is put off, father!" exclaimed the smith; "the heirs will have three months and a half more to make their claim. And now that these people are unmasked," added Agricola, pointing to Rodin and Father d'Aigrigny, "we have nothing more to fear from them. We shall be on our guard; and the orphans, Mademoiselle de Cardoville, my worthy master, M. Hardy, and this young Indian will all recover their own."

We must renounce the attempt to paint the delight, the transport of Gabriel and Agricola, of Dagobert and Marshal Simon's father, of Samuel and Bathsheba.

Faringhea alone remained in gloomy silence before the portrait of the man with the black-barred forehead.

As for the fury of Father d'Aigrigny and Rodin, when they saw Samuel retake possession of the casket, we must also renounce any attempt to describe it.

On the notary's suggestion, who took with him the codicil to have it opened according to the formalities of the law, Samuel agreed that it would be more prudent to deposit in the Bank of France the securities of immense value that were now known to be in his possession.

While all the generous hearts, which had for a moment suffered so much, were overflowing with happiness, hope, and joy, Father d'Aigrigny and Rodin quitted the house with rage and death in their souls.

The reverend father got into his carriage and said to his servants: "To the Hotel Saint-Dizier!" Then, worn out and crushed, he fell back upon the seat and hid his face in his hands, while he uttered a deep groan.

Rodin sat next to him, and looked with a mixture of anger and disdain at this so dejected and broken-spirited man.

"The coward!" said he to himself. "He despairs; and yet ——"

A quarter of an hour later the carriage stopped in the Rue de Babylon, in the court-yard of the Hotel Saint-Dizier.

CHAPTER XI

THE FIRST LAST, AND THE LAST FIRST

THE carriage had traveled rapidly to the Hotel Saint-Dizier. During all the way Rodin remained mute, contenting himself with observing Father d'Aigrigny and listening to him, as he poured forth his grief and fury in a long monologue, interrupted by exclamations, lamentation, and bursts of rage, directed against the strokes of that inexorable destiny which had ruined in a moment the best-founded hopes.

When the carriage entered the court-yard and stopped before the portico, the princess's face could be seen through one of the windows, half hidden by the folds of a curtain; in her burning anxiety, she came to see if it was really Father d'Aigrigny who arrived at the house. Still more, in defiance of all ordinary rules, this great lady, generally so scrupulous as to appearances, hurried from her apartment and descended several steps of the staircase to meet Father d'Aigrigny, who was coming up with a dejected air.

At sight of the livid and agitated countenance of the reverend father, the princess stopped suddenly and grew pale. She suspected that all was lost. A look rapidly exchanged with her old lover left her no doubt of the issue she so much feared.

Rodin humbly followed the reverend father, and both, preceded by the princess, entered the room. The door once closed, the princess, addressing Father d'Aigrigny, exclaimed with unspeakable anguish: "What has happened?"

Instead of answering this question, the reverend father, his eyes sparkling with rage, his lips white, his features contracted, looked fixedly at the princess, and said to her: "Do you know the amount of this inheritance that we estimated at forty millions?"

"I understand," cried the princess; "we have been deceived. The inheritance amounts to nothing, and all you have done has been in vain."

"Yes, it has indeed been in vain," answered the reverend father, grinding his teeth with rage; "it was no question of forty millions, but of two hundred and twelve millions."



"Two hundred and twelve millions?" repeated the princess in amazement, as she drew back a step. "It is impossible!"

"I tell you I saw the vouchers, which were examined by the notary"

"Two hundred and twelve millions?" resumed the princess, with

deep dejection. "It is an immense and sovereign power — and you have renounced — you have not struggled for it, by every possible means, and till the last moment?"

"Madame, I have done all that I could! — notwithstanding the treachery of Gabriel, who this very morning declared that he renounced us, and separated from the society"

"Ungrateful!" said the princess unaffectedly.

"The deed of gift, which I had the precaution to have prepared by the notary, was in such good, legal form, that, in spite of the objections of that accursed soldier and his son, the notary had put me in possession of the treasure."

"Two hundred and twelve millions!" repeated the princess, clasping her hands. "Verily, it is like a dream!"

"Yes," replied Father d'Aigrigny bitterly, "for us, this possession is indeed a dream, for a codicil has been discovered, which puts off for three months and a half all the testamentary provisions. Now that our very precautions have roused the suspicion of all these heirs — now that they know the enormous amount at stake — they will be upon their guard; and all is lost."

"But who is the wretch that produced this codicil?"

"A woman."

"What woman?"

"Some wandering creature, that Gabriel says he met in America, where she saved his life."

"And how could this woman be there — how could she know the existence of this codicil?"

"I think it was all arranged with a miserable Jew, the guardian of the house, whose family has had charge of the funds for three generations; he had no doubt some secret instructions, in case he suspected the detention of any of the heirs, for this Marius de Rennepont had foreseen that our Company would keep their eyes upon his race."

"But can you not dispute the validity of this codicil?"

"What, go to law in these times, litigate about a will, incur the certainty of a thousand clamors, with no security for success? It is bad enough that even this should get wind. Alas! it is terrible. So near the goal! After so much care and trouble. An affair that had been followed up with so much perseverance during a century and a half!"

"Two hundred and twelve millions!" said the princess. "The Order would have had no need to look for establishments in foreign countries; with such resources, it would have been able to impose itself upon France."

"Yes," resumed Father d'Aigrigny, with bitterness; "by means of education, we might have possessed ourselves of the rising generation. The power is altogether incalculable." Then, stamping with his foot, he resumed: "I tell you, that it is enough to drive one mad with rage! an affair so wisely, ably, patiently conducted!"

"Is there no hope?"

"Only that Gabriel may not revoke his donation, in as far as concerns himself. That alone would be a considerable sum—not less than thirty millions."

"It is enormous; it is almost what you hoped," said the princess; "then, why despair?"

"Because it is evident that Gabriel will dispute this donation. However legal it may be, he will find means to annul it, now that he is free, informed as to our designs, and surrounded by his adopted family. I tell you, that all is lost. There is no hope left. I think it will even be prudent to write to Rome to obtain permission to leave Paris for a while. This town is odious to me!"

"Oh, yes! I see that no hope is left—since you, my friend, have decided almost to fly."

Father d'Aigrigny was completely discouraged and broken down; this terrible blow had destroyed all life and energy within him. He threw himself back in an arm-chair, quite overcome.

During the preceding dialogue Rodin was standing humbly near the door, with his old hat in his hand. Two or three times, at certain passages in the conversation between Father d'Aigrigny and the princess, the cadaverous face of the *Socius*, whose wrath appeared to be concentrated, was slightly flushed, and his flabby eyelids were tinged with red, as if the blood mounted in consequence of an interior struggle; but, immediately after, his dull countenance resumed its pallid hue.

"I must write instantly to Rome, to announce this defeat, which has become an event of the first importance, because it overthrows immense hopes," said Father d'Aigrigny, much depressed.

The reverend father had remained seated; pointing to a table, he said to Rodin, with an abrupt and haughty air:

"Write!"

The *Socius* placed his hat on the ground, answered with a respectful bow the command, and with stooping head and slanting walk went to seat himself on a chair that stood before a desk. Then, taking pen and paper, he waited, silent and motionless, for the dictation of his superior.

"With your permission, princess?" said Father d'Aigrigny to Madame de Saint-Dizier. The latter answered by an impatient wave of the

hand, as if she reproached him for the formal demand at such a time. The reverend father bowed, and dictated these words in a hoarse and hollow voice: "All our hopes, which of late had become almost certainties, have been suddenly defeated. The affair of the Rennepont inheritance, in spite of all the care and skill employed upon it, has completely and finally failed. At the point to which matters had been brought, it is unfortunately worse than a failure; it is a most disastrous event for the society, which was clearly entitled to this property, fraudulently withdrawn from a confiscation made in our favor. My conscience at least bears witness that, to the last moment, I did all that was possible to defend and secure our rights. But I repeat, we must consider this important affair as lost absolutely and forever, and think no more about it."

Thus dictating, Father d'Aigrigny's back was turned toward Rodin. At a sudden movement made by the *Socius*, in rising and throwing his pen upon the table instead of continuing to write, the reverend father turned round, and, looking at Rodin with profound astonishment, said to him: "Well! what are you doing?"

"It is time to end this; the man is mad!" said Rodin to himself, as he advanced slowly toward the fireplace.

"What! you quit your place—you cease writing?" said the reverend father, in amazement. Then, addressing the princess, who shared in his astonishment, he added, as he glanced contemptuously at the *Socius*: "He is losing his senses."

"Forgive him," replied Madame de Saint-Dizier; "it is, no doubt, the emotion caused by the ruin of this affair."

"Thank the princess, return to your place, and continue to write," said Father d'Aigrigny to Rodin in a tone of disdainful compassion, as with imperious finger he pointed to the table.

The *Socius*, perfectly indifferent to this new order, approached the fireplace, drew himself up to his full height as he turned his arched back to the fire, planted himself firmly on his legs, stamped on the carpet with the heel of his clumsy, greasy shoes, crossed his hands beneath the flaps of his old, soiled coat, and, lifting his head, looked fixedly at Father d'Aigrigny. The *Socius* had not spoken a word, but his hideous countenance, now flushed, suddenly revealed such a sense of his superiority, and such sovereign contempt for Father d'Aigrigny, mingled with so calm and serene a daring, that the reverend father and the princess were quite confounded by it. They felt themselves overawed by this little old man, so sordid and so ugly.

Father d'Aigrigny knew too well the customs of the Company to believe his humble secretary capable of assuming so suddenly these

airs of transcendent superiority without a motive, or, rather, without a positive right. Late, too late, the reverend father perceived that this subordinate agent might be partly a spy, partly an experienced assistant, who, according to the constitutions of the Order, had the power and mission to depose and provisionally replace, in certain urgent cases, the incapable person over whom he was stationed as a guard.

The reverend father was not deceived. From the general to the provincials and to the rectors of the colleges, all the superior members of the Order have stationed near them, often without their knowledge and in apparently the lowest capacities, men able to assume their functions at any given moment, and who, with this view, constantly keep up a direct correspondence with Rome.

From the moment Rodin had assumed this position, the manners of Father d'Aigrigny, generally so haughty, underwent a change. Though it cost him a good deal, he said with hesitation, mingled with deference: "You have, no doubt, the right to command me, who hitherto have commanded."

Rodin, without answering, drew from his well-rubbed and greasy pocket-book a slip of paper stamped upon both sides, on which were written several lines in Latin.

When he had read it, Father d'Aigrigny pressed this paper respectfully, even religiously, to his lips; then returned it to Rodin with a low bow. When he again raised his head he was purple with shame and vexation. Notwithstanding his habit of passive obedience and immutable respect for the will of the Order, he felt a bitter and violent rage at seeing himself thus abruptly deposed from power. That was not all. Though, for a long time past, all relations in gallantry had ceased between him and Madame de Saint-Dizier, the latter was not the less a woman; and for him to suffer this humiliation in presence of a woman was, undoubtedly, cruel, as, notwithstanding his entrance into the Order, he had not wholly laid aside the character of a man of the world.

Moreover, the princess, instead of appearing hurt and offended by this sudden transformation of the superior into a subaltern, and of the subaltern into a superior, looked at Rodin with a sort of curiosity mingled with interest.

As a woman, as a woman intensely ambitious, seeking to connect herself with every powerful influence, the princess loved this strange species of contrast. She found it curious and interesting to see this man, almost in rags, mean in appearance, and ignobly ugly, and but lately the most humble of subordinates, look down from the height of his superior intelligence upon the nobleman by birth, distinguished for

the elegance of his manners, and just before so considerable a personage in the society.

From that moment, as the more important personage of the two, Rodin completely took the place of Father d'Aigrigny in the princess's mind. The first pang of humiliation over, the reverend father, though his pride bled inwardly, applied all his knowledge of the world to behave with redoubled courtesy toward Rodin, who had become his superior by this abrupt change of fortune.

But the *ex-Socius*, incapable of appreciating, or rather of acknowledging, such delicate shades of manner, established himself at once firmly, imperiously, brutally in his new position, not from any reaction of offended pride, but from a consciousness of what he was really worth.

A long acquaintance with Father d'Aigrigny had revealed to him the inferiority of the latter.

"You threw away your pen," said Father d'Aigrigny to Rodin, with extreme deference, "while I was dictating a note for Rome. Will you do me the favor to tell me how I have acted wrong?"

"Directly," replied Rodin, in his sharp, cutting voice. "For a long time this affair appeared to me above your strength; but I abstained from interfering. And yet, what mistakes! what poverty of invention; what coarseness in the means employed to bring it about!"

"I can hardly understand your reproaches," answered Father d'Aigrigny mildly, though a secret bitterness made its way through his apparent submission. "Was not the success certain, had it not been for this codicil? Did you not yourself assist in the measures that you now blame?"

"You commanded then, and it was my duty to obey. Besides, you were just on the point of succeeding, not because of the means you had taken, but in spite of those means, with all their awkward and revolting brutality."

"Sir—you are severe," said Father d'Aigrigny.

"I am just. One has to be prodigiously clever, truly, to shut up any one in a room and then lock the door! And yet, what else have you done? The daughters of General Simon?—imprisoned at Leipsic, shut up in a convent at Paris! Adrienne de Cardoville?—placed in confinement. Sleepinbuff?—put in prison. Djalma?—quieted by a narcotic. One only ingenious method, and a thousand times safer, because it acted morally, not materially, was employed to remove M. Hardy. As for your other proceedings, they were all bad, uncertain, dangerous. Why? Because they were violent, and violence provokes violence. Then it is no longer a struggle of keen, skillful, persevering men, seeing through the darkness in which they walk, but a match of fisticuffs in broad day.

Though we should be always in action, we should always shrink from view; and yet you could find no better plan than to draw universal attention to us by proceedings at once open and deplorably notorious. To make them more secret, you call in the guard, the commissary of police, the jailers for your accomplices. It is pitiable, sir; nothing but the most brilliant success could cover such wretched folly; and this success has been wanting."

"Sir," said Father d'Aigrigny, deeply hurt, for the Princess de Saint-Dizier, unable to conceal the sort of admiration caused in her by the plain, decisive words of Rodin, looked at her old lover with an air that seemed to say, *He is right*; "sir, you are more than severe in your judgment; and, notwithstanding the deference I owe to you, I must observe that I am not accustomed —"

"There are many other things to which you are not accustomed," said Rodin, harshly interrupting the reverend father; "but you will accustom yourself to them. You have hitherto had a false idea of your own value. There is the old leaven of the soldier and the worldling fermenting within you, which deprives your reason of the coolness, lucidity, and penetration that it ought to possess. You have been a fine military officer, brisk and gay, foremost in wars and festivals, with pleasures and women. These things have half worn you out. You will never be anything but a subaltern; you have been thoroughly tested. You will always want that vigor and concentration of mind which governs men and events. That vigor and concentration of mind I have — and do you know why? It is because, solely devoted to the service of the Company, I have always been ugly, dirty, unloved, unloving — I have all my *manhood* about me!"

In pronouncing these words, full of cynical pride, Rodin was truly fearful. The Princess de Saint-Dizier thought him almost handsome by his energy and audacity

Father d'Aigrigny, feeling himself overawed, invincibly and inexorably, by this diabolical being, made a last effort to resist, and exclaimed: "Oh! sir, these boastings are no proofs of valor and power. We must see you at work."

"Yes," replied Rodin coldly; "do you know at what work?" Rodin was fond of this interrogative mode of expression. "Why, at the work that you so basely abandon."

"What!" cried the Princess de Saint-Dizier; for Father d'Aigrigny, stupefied at Rodin's audacity, was unable to utter a word.

"I say," resumed Rodin slowly, "that I undertake to bring to a good issue this affair of the Rennepont inheritance, which appears to you so desperate."

"You?" cried Father d'Aigrigny. "You?"

"I."

"But they have unmasked our maneuvers."

"So much the better; we shall be obliged to invent others."

"But they will suspect us in everything."

"So much the better; the success that is difficult is the most certain."

"What! do you hope to make Gabriel consent not to revoke his donation, which is perhaps illegal?"

"I mean to bring into the coffers of the Company the whole of the two hundred and twelve millions, of which they wish to cheat us. Is that clear?"

"It is clear—but impossible."

"And I tell you that it is, and must be, possible. Do you not understand, short-sighted as you are!" cried Rodin, animated to such a degree that his cadaverous face became slightly flushed; "do you not understand that it is no longer in our choice to hesitate? Either these two hundred and twelve millions must be ours—and then the reëstablishment of our sovereign influence in France is sure; for, in these venal times, with such a sum at command, you may bribe or overthrow a government, or light up the flame of civil war, and restore legitimacy, which is our natural ally, and, owing all to us, would give us all in return —"

"That is clear," cried the princess, clasping her hands in admiration.

"If, on the contrary," resumed Rodin, "these two hundred and twelve millions fall into the hands of the family of the Renneponts, it will be our ruin and our destruction. We shall create a stock of bitter and implacable enemies. Have you not heard the execrable designs of that Rennepont, with regard to the association he recommends, and which, by an accursed fatality, his race are just in a condition to realize? Think of the forces that would rally round these millions. There would be Marshal Simon, acting in the name of his daughters—that is, the man of the people become a duke, without being the vainer for it, which secures his influence with the mob, because military spirit and Bonapartism still represent, in the eyes of the French populace, the traditions of national honor and glory. There would be François Hardy, the liberal, independent, enlightened citizen, the type of the great manufacturer, the friend of progress, the benefactor of his workmen. There would be Gabriel—'the good priest,' as they say! the apostle of the primitive gospel, the representative of the democracy of the church, of the poor country curate as opposed to the rich bishop, the tiller of the vine as opposed to him who sits in the shade of it; the propagator of all the ideas of fraternity, emancipation, progress,—to use their own jargon,—and that, not in the name of revolutionary and incendiary politics, but

in the name of a religion of charity, love, and peace—to speak as they speak. There, too, would be Adrienne de Cardoville, the type of elegance, grace, and beauty, the priestess of the senses, which she deifies by refining and cultivating them. I need not tell you of her wit and audacity; you know them but too well. No one could be more dangerous to us than this creature, a patrician in blood, a plebeian in heart, a poet in imagination. Then, too, there would be Prince Djalma, chivalrous, bold, ready for adventure, knowing nothing of civilized life, implacable in his hate as in his affection, a terrible instrument for whoever can make use of him. In this detestable family, even such a wretch as Sleepinbuff, who in himself is of no value, raised and purified by the contact of these generous and far from narrow natures (as they call them), might represent the working-class, and take a large share in the influence of that association. Now do you not think that if all these people, already exasperated against us, because, as they say, we have wished to rob them, should follow the detestable counsels of this Rennepont,—should unite their forces round this immense fortune, which would strengthen them a hundred-fold,—do you not think that, if they declare a deadly war against us, they will be the most dangerous enemies that we have ever had? I tell you that the Company has never been in such serious peril; yes, it is now a question of life and death. We must no longer defend ourselves, but lead the attack, so as to annihilate this accursed race of Rennepont, and obtain possession of these millions.”

At this picture, drawn by Rodin with a feverish animation, which had only the more influence from its unexpectedness, the princess and Father d'Aigrigny looked at each other in confusion.

“I confess,” said the reverend father to Rodin, “I had not considered all the dangerous consequences of this association recommended by M. de Rennepont. I believe that the heirs, from the characters we know them to be possessed of, would wish to realize this Utopia. The peril is great and pressing; what is to be done?”

“What, sir? You have to act upon ignorant, heroic, enthusiastic natures like Djalma's; sensuous and eccentric characters like Adrienne de Cardoville's; simple and ingenuous minds like Rose and Blanche Simon's; honest and frank dispositions like François Hardy's; angelic and pure souls like Gabriel's; brutal and stupid instincts like Jacques',—and can you ask, *What is to be done?*”

“In truth, I do not understand you,” said Father d'Aigrigny.

“I believe it. Your past conduct shows as much,” replied Rodin contemptuously “You have had recourse to the lowest and most mechanical contrivances, instead of acting upon the noble and generous passions,

which, once united, would constitute so formidable a bond; but which, now divided and isolated, are open to every surprise, every seduction, every attack! Do you at length understand me? Not yet?" added Rodin, shrugging his shoulders. "Answer me—do people die of despair?"

"Yes."

"May not the gratitude of successful love reach the last limits of insane generosity?"

"Yes."

"May there not be such horrible deceptions that suicide is the only refuge from frightful realities?"

"Yes."

"May not the excess of sensuality lead to the grave by a slow and voluptuous agony?"

"Yes."

"Are there not in life such terrible circumstances that the most worldly, the firmest, the most impious characters throw themselves blindly, overwhelmed with despair, into the arms of religion and abandon all earthly greatness for sackcloth and prayers and solitude?"

"Yes."

"Are there not a thousand occasions in which the reaction of the passions works the most extraordinary changes and brings about the most tragic catastrophes in the life of man and woman?"

"No doubt."

"Well, then! why ask me '*What is to be done?*' What would you say, for example, if, before three months are over, the most dangerous members of this family of the Rennepons should come to implore, upon their knees, admission to that very society which they now hold in horror, and from which Gabriel has just separated?"

"Such a conversion is impossible," cried Father d'Aigrigny.

"Impossible! What were you, sir, fifteen years ago?" said Rodin. "An impious and debauched man of the world. And yet you came to us, and your wealth became ours. What! we have conquered princes, kings, popes; we have absorbed and extinguished in our unity magnificent intelligences which from afar shone with too dazzling a light; we have all but governed two worlds; we have perpetuated our society, full of life, rich and formidable, even to this day, through all the hate and all the persecutions that have assailed us; and yet we shall not be able to get the better of a single family which threatens our Company and has despoiled us of a large fortune? What! we are not skillful enough to obtain this result without having recourse to awkward and dangerous violence? You do not know, then, the immense field that is thrown open by the mutually destructive power of human passions

skillfully combined, opposed, restrained, excited? particularly," added Rodin, with a strange smile, "when, thanks to a powerful ally, these passions are sure to be redoubled in ardor and energy"

"What ally?" asked Father d'Aigrigny, who, as well as the Princess de Saint-Dizier, felt a sort of admiration mixed with terror.

"Yes," resumed Rodin, without answering the reverend father; "this formidable ally who comes to our assistance may bring about the most astonishing transformations—make the coward brave, and the impious credulous, and the gentle ferocious——"

"But this ally?" cried the princess, oppressed with a vague sense of fear. "This great and formidable ally—who is he?"

"If he comes," resumed Rodin, still impassible, "the youngest and most vigorous, every moment in danger of death, will have no advantage over the sick man at his last gasp."

"But who is this ally?" exclaimed Father d'Aigrigny, more and more alarmed; for, as the picture became darker, Rodin's face became more cadaverous.

"This ally, who can decimate a population, may carry away with him in a shroud that he drags at his heels the whole of an accursed race; but even he must respect the life of that great, intangible body which does not perish with the death of its members, for the spirit of the Society of Jesus is immortal!"

"And this ally?"

"Oh! this ally," resumed Rodin, "who advances with slow steps, and whose terrible coming is announced by mournful presentiments——"

"Is——"

"The CHOLERA!"

These words, pronounced by Rodin in an abrupt voice, made the Princess and Father d'Aigrigny grow pale and tremble. Rodin's look was gloomy and chilling, like a specter's. For some moments the silence of the tomb reigned in the saloon. Rodin was the first to break it. Still impassible, he pointed with imperious gesture to the table, where a few minutes before he had himself been humbly seated, and said in a sharp voice to Father d'Aigrigny, "Write!"

The reverend father started at first with surprise; then, remembering that from a superior he had become an inferior, he rose, bowed lowly to Rodin, as he passed before him, seated himself at the table, took the pen, and said, "I am ready."

Rodin dictated, and the reverend father wrote as follows: "By the mismanagement of the Reverend Father d'Aigrigny, the affair of the inheritance of the Rennepont family has been seriously compromised. The sum amounts to two hundred and twelve millions. Notwithstand-

ing the check we have received, we believe we may safely promise to prevent these Rennepons from injuring the society, and to restore the two hundred and twelve millions to their legitimate possessors. We only ask for the most complete and extensive powers."

.

A quarter of an hour after this scene, Rodin left Saint-Dizier House, brushing with his sleeve the old greasy hat, which he had pulled off to return the salute of the porter by a very low bow.

PART XII

RODIN'S PROMISES

CHAPTER I

THE STRANGER



THE following scene took place on the morrow of the day in which Father d'Aigrigny had been so rudely degraded by Rodin to the subaltern position formerly occupied by the *Socius*.

.

It is well known that the Rue Clovis is one of the most solitary streets in the Montagne St. Geneviève district. At the epoch of this narrative, the house No. 4, in this street, was composed of one principal building, through which ran a dark passage, leading to a little, gloomy court, at the end of which was a second building, in a singularly miserable and dilapidated condition.

On the ground-floor, in front of the house, was a half-subterraneous shop, in which were sold charcoal, faggots, vegetables, and milk.

Nine o'clock in the morning had just struck. The mistress of the shop, one Mother Arsène, an old woman of a mild, sickly countenance, clad in a brown stuff dress, with a red bandana round her head, was mounted on the top step of the stairs which led down to her door, and was employed in setting out her goods,—that is, on one side of the door she placed a tin milk-can, and on the other some bunches of stale vegetables, flanked with yellowed cabbages. At the bottom of the steps, in the shadowy depths of the cellar, one could see the light of the burning charcoal in a little stove.

This shop, situated at the side of the passage, served as a porter's lodge, and the old woman acted as portress.

On a sudden, a pretty little creature, coming from the house, entered lightly and merrily the shop.

This young girl was Rose-Pompon, the intimate friend of the Bacchanal Queen,—Rose-Pompon, a *widow* for the moment, whose bacchanalian *cicisbeo* was Nini Moulin, the orthodox scapegrace, who, on occasion, after drinking his fill, could transform himself into Jacques Dumoulin the religious writer, and pass gayly from disheveled dances to ultramontane polemics, from Full-blown Tulips to Catholic pamphlets.

Rose-Pompon had just quitted her bed, as appeared by the negligence of her strange morning costume; no doubt for want of any other head-dress, on her beautiful light hair, smooth and well combed, was stuck jauntily a foraging-cap, borrowed from her masquerading costume. Nothing could be more sprightly than that face, seventeen years old, rosy, fresh, dimpled, and brilliantly lighted up by a pair of gay, sparkling blue eyes. Rose-Pompon was so closely enveloped from the neck to the feet in a red and green plaid cloak, rather faded, that one could guess the cause of her modest embarrassment. Her naked feet, so white that one could not tell if she wore stockings or not, were slipped into little morocco shoes, with plated buckles. It was easy to perceive that her cloak concealed some article which she held in her hand.

"Good-day, Rose-Pompon," said Mother Arsène, with a kindly air; "you are early this morning. Had you no dance last night?"

"Don't talk of it, Mother Arsène; I had no heart to dance. Poor Cephyse—the Bacchanal Queen—has done nothing but cry all night. She cannot console herself, that her lover should be in prison."

"Now, look here, my girl," said the old woman, "I must speak to you about your friend Cephyse. You won't be angry?"

"Am I ever angry?" said Rose-Pompon, shrugging her shoulders.

"Don't you think that M. Philemon will scold me on his return?"

"Scold you! what for?"

"Because of his rooms, that you occupy."

"Why, Mother Arsène, did not Philemon tell you that, in his absence, I was to be as much mistress of his two rooms as I am of himself?"

"I do not speak of you, but of your friend Cephyse, whom you have also brought to occupy M. Philemon's lodgings."

"And where would she have gone without me, my good Mother Arsène? Since her lover was arrested, she has not dared to return home, because she owes ever so many quarters' rent. Seeing her troubles, I said to her: 'Come lodge at Philemon's. When he returns, he must find another place for you.'"

"Well, little lovely—if you only assure me that M. Philemon will not be angry ——"

"Angry? for what? That we spoil his things? A fine set of things



he has to spoil! I broke his last cup yesterday, and am forced to fetch the milk in this comic concern."

So saying, laughing with all her might, Rose-Pompon drew her pretty little white arm from under her cloak, and presented to Mother

Arsène one of those champagne-glasses of colossal capacity, which hold about a bottle.

"Oh, dear!" said the green-grocer in amazement; "it is like a glass trumpet."

"It is Philemon's grand gala-glass, which they gave him when he took his degrees in boating," said Rose-Pompon gravely.

"And to think you must put your milk in it! I am really ashamed," said Mother Arsène.

"So am I! If I were to meet any one on the stairs, holding this glass in my hand like a church taper, I should burst out laughing, and break the last remnant of Philemon's bazar, and he would give me his malediction."

"There is no danger that you will meet any one. The first-floor is gone out, and the second gets up very late."

"Talking of lodgers," said Rose-Pompon, "is there not a room to let on the second-floor in the rear house? It might do for Cephyse, when Philemon comes back."

"Yes, there is a little closet in the roof, just over the two rooms of the mysterious old fellow," said Mother Arsène.

"Oh, yes! Father Charlemagne. Have you found out anything more about him?"

"Dear me, no, my girl! only that he came this morning at break of day and knocked at my shutters. 'Have you received a letter for me, my good lady?' said he—for he is always so polite, the dear man!—'No, sir,' said I. 'Well, then, pray don't disturb yourself, my good lady!' said he, 'I will call again.' And so he went away."

"Does he never sleep in the house?"

"Never. No doubt he lodges somewhere else; but he passes some hours here once every four or five days."

"And always comes alone?"

"Always."

"Are you quite sure? Does he never manage to slip in some little puss of a woman? Take care, or Philemon will give you notice to quit," said Rose-Pompon, with an air of mock-modesty.

"M. Charlemagne with a woman! Oh, poor, dear man!" said the green-grocer, raising her hands to heaven; "if you saw him with his greasy hat, his old gray coat, his patched umbrella, and his simple face; he looks more like a saint than anything else."

"But then, Mother Arsène, what does the saint do here all alone for hours in that hole at the bottom of the court, where one can hardly see at noonday?"

"That's what I ask myself, my dovey, what can he be doing? It

can't be that he comes to look at his furniture, for he has nothing but a flock-bed, a table, a stove, a chair, and an old trunk."

"Somewhat in the style of Philemon's establishment," said Rose-Pompon.

"Well, notwithstanding that, Rosey, he is as much afraid that any one should come into his room as if we were all thieves and his furniture was made of massy gold. He has had a patent lock put on the door at his own expense; he never leaves me his key; and he lights his fire himself rather than let anybody into his room."

"And you say he is old?"

"Yes, fifty or sixty"

"And ugly?"

"Just fancy, little viper's eyes, looking as if they had been bored with a gimlet, in a face as pale as death—so pale that the lips are white. That's for his appearance. As for his character, the good old man is so polite! he pulls off his hat so often, and makes you such low bows that it is quite embarrassing."

"But, to come back to the point," resumed Rose-Pompon, "what can he do all alone in those two rooms? If Cephyse should take the closet on Philemon's return, we may amuse ourselves by finding out something about it. How much do they want for the little room?"

"Why, it is in such bad condition, that I think the landlord would let it go for fifty or fifty-five francs a year, for there is no room for a stove, and the only light comes through a small pane in the roof."

"Poor Cephyse!" said Rose, sighing and shaking her head sorrowfully. "After having amused herself so well and flung away so much money with Jacques Rennepont, to live in such a place and support herself by hard work! She must have courage!"

"Why, indeed, there is a great difference between that closet and the coach-and-four in which Cephyse came to fetch you the other day, with all the fine masks, that looked so gay—particularly the fat man in the silver-paper helmet, with the plume and the top-boots. What a jolly fellow!"

"Yes, Nini Moulin. There is no one like him to dance the *forbidden fruit*. You should see him with Cephyse, the Bacchanal Queen. Poor, laughing, noisy thing!—the only noise she makes now is crying."

"Oh! these young people—these young people!" said the green-grocer.

"Easy, Mother Arsène; you were young once."

"I hardly know I have always thought myself much the same as I am now"

"And your lovers, Mother Arsène?"

"Lovers! Oh, yes! I was too ugly for that — and too well taken care of."

"Your mother looked after you, then?"

"No, my girl; but I was harnessed."

"Harnessed!" cried Rose-Pompon, in amazement, interrupting the dealer.

"Yes; harnessed to a water-cart, along with my brother. So, you see, when we had drawn like a pair of horses for eight or ten hours a day, I had no heart to think of nonsense."

"Poor Mother Arsène! what a hard life," said Rose-Pompon, with interest.

"In the winter, when it froze, it was hard enough. I and my brother were obliged to be rough-shod, for fear of slipping."

"What a trade for a woman! It breaks one's heart. And they forbid people to harness dogs!" added Rose-Pompon sententiously.

"Why, 'tis true," resumed Mother Arsène. "Animals are sometimes better off than people. But what would you have? One must live, you know. As you make your bed, you must lie. It was hard enough, and I got a disease of the lungs by it — which was not my fault. The strap with which I was harnessed pressed so hard against my chest that I could scarcely breathe; so I left the trade, and took to a shop, which is just to tell you that if I had had a pretty face and opportunity, I might have done like so many other young people, who begin with laughter and finish ——"

"With a laugh t'other side of the mouth, you would say; it is true, Mother Arsène. But, you see, every one has not the courage to go into harness, in order to remain virtuous. A body says to herself, you must have some amusement while you are young and pretty; you will not always be seventeen years old, and then — and then — the world will end, or you will get married."

"But perhaps it would have been better to begin by that."

"Yes, but one is too stupid; one does not know how to catch the men, or to frighten them. One is simple, confiding, and they only laugh at us. Why, Mother Arsène, I am myself an example that would make you shudder; but 'tis quite enough to have had one's sorrows, without fretting one's self at the remembrance."

"What, my beauty! you, so young and gay, have had sorrows?"

"Ah, Mother Arsène! I believe you. At fifteen and a half I began to cry, and never left off till I was sixteen. That was enough, I think."

"They deceived you, mademoiselle?"

"They did worse. They treated me as they have treated many a poor girl who had no more wish to go wrong than I had. My story is not a

three-volume one. My father and mother are peasants near Saint-Valéry, but so poor — so poor that, having five children to provide for, they were obliged to send me, at eight years old, to my aunt, who was a charwoman here in Paris. The good woman took me out of charity, and very kind it was of her, for I earned but little. At eleven years of age she sent me to work in one of the factories of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. I don't wish to speak ill of the masters of these factories; but what do they care, if little boys and girls are mixed up pell-mell with young men and women of eighteen to twenty? Now you see there, as everywhere, some are no better than they should be; they are not particular, in word or deed, and I ask you, what an example for the children, who hear and see more than you think for. Then, what happens? They get accustomed, as they grow older, to hear and see things that afterward will not shock them at all."

"What you say there is true, Rose-Pompon. Poor children! who takes any trouble about them? — not their father or mother, for they are at their daily work."

"Yes, yes, Mother Arsène, it is all very well; it is easy to cry down a young girl that has gone wrong; but if they knew all the ins and outs they would perhaps pity rather than blame her. To come back to myself — at fifteen years old I was tolerably pretty. One day I had something to ask of the head-clerk. I went to him in his private room. He told me he would grant what I wanted and even take me under his patronage if I would listen to him; and he began by trying to kiss me. I resisted. Then he said to me: 'You refuse my offer? You shall have no more work; I discharge you from the factory!'"

"Oh, the wicked man!" said Mother Arsène.

"I went home all in tears, and my poor aunt encouraged me not to yield, and she would try and place me elsewhere. Yes, but it was impossible; the factories were all full. Misfortunes never come single; my aunt fell ill and there was not a sou in the house; I plucked up my courage and returned to entreat the mercy of the clerk at the factory. Nothing would do. 'So much the worse,' said he; 'you are throwing away your luck. If you had been more complying, I should perhaps have married you.' What could I do, Mother Arsène? misery was staring me in the face; I had no work; my aunt was ill. The clerk said he would marry me; I did like so many others."

"And when, afterward, you spoke to him about marriage?"

"Of course he laughed at me, and in six months left me. Then I wept all the tears in my body till none remained; then I was very ill, and then — I consoled myself as one may console one's self for anything. After some changes, I met with Philemon. It is upon him that I revenge

myself for what others have done to me. I am his tyrant," added Rose-Pompon, with a tragic air, as the cloud passed away which had darkened her pretty face during her recital to Mother Arsène.

"It is true," said the latter thoughtfully. "They deceive a poor girl—who is there to protect or defend her? Oh! the evil we do does not always come from ourselves, and then ——"

"I spy Nini Moulin!" cried Rose-Pompon, interrupting the green-grocer, and pointing to the other side of the street. "How early abroad! What can he want with me?" and Rose-Pompon wrapped herself still more closely and modestly in her cloak.

It was indeed Jacques Dumoulin, who advanced with his hat stuck on one side, with rubicund nose and sparkling eyes, dressed in a loose coat, which displayed the rotundity of his abdomen. His hands, one of which held a huge cane shouldered like a musket, were plunged into the vast pockets of his outer garments.

Just as he reached the threshold of the door, no doubt with the intention of speaking to the portress, he perceived Rose-Pompon. "What!" he exclaimed, "my pupil already stirring! That is fortunate. I came on purpose to bless her at the rise of morn!"

So saying, Nini Moulin advanced with open arms toward Rose-Pompon, who drew back a step.

"What, ungrateful child!" resumed the writer on divinity. "Will you refuse me the morning's paternal kiss?"

"I accept paternal kisses from none but Philemon. I had a letter from him yesterday, with a jar of preserves, two geese, a bottle of home-made brandy, and an eel. What ridiculous presents! I kept the drink, and changed the rest for two darling live pigeons, which I have installed in Philemon's cabinet, and a very pretty dove-cote it makes me. For the rest, my husband is coming back with seven hundred francs, which he got from his respectable family, under pretense of learning the bass viol, the cornet-à-piston, and the speaking-trumpet, so as to make his way into society, and a slap-up marriage, to use your expression, my good child."

"Well, my dear pupil, we will taste the family brandy, and enjoy ourselves in expectation of Philemon and his seven hundred francs."

So saying, Nini Moulin slapped the pockets of his waistcoat, which gave forth a metallic sound, and added: "I come to propose to you to embellish my life, to-day and to-morrow, and even the day after, if your heart is willing."

"If the amusements are decent and paternal, my heart does not say no."

"Be satisfied; I will act by you as your grandfather, your great-grandfather, your family portrait. We will have a ride, a dinner, the play, a fancy dress ball, and a supper afterward. Will that suit you?"

"On condition that poor Cephyse is to go with us. It will raise her spirits."

"Well, Cephyse shall be of the party."

"Have you come into a fortune, great apostle?"

"Better than that, most rosy and pompous of all Rose-Pompons! I am head editor of a religious journal; and as I must make some appearance in so respectable a concern, I ask every month for four weeks in advance and three days of liberty. On this condition, I consent to play the saint for twenty-seven days out of thirty, and to be always as grave and heavy as the paper itself."

"A journal! that will be something droll, and dance forbidden steps all alone on the tables of the cafés."

"Yes, it will be droll enough; but not for everybody. They are rich sacristans who pay the expenses. They don't look to money, provided the journal bites, tears, burns, pounds, exterminates, and destroys. On my word of honor, I shall never have been in such a fury!" added Nini Moulin, with a loud, hoarse laugh. "I shall wash the wounds of my adversaries with venom of the finest vintage and gall of the first quality"

For his peroration, Nini Moulin imitated the pop of uncorking a bottle of champagne — which made Rose-Pompon laugh heartily

"And what," resumed she, "will be the name of your journal of sacristans?"

"It will be called *Neighborly Love*."

"Come! that is a very pretty name."

"Wait a little! there is a second title."

"Let us hear it."

"*Neighborly Love*; or, *the Exterminator of the Incredulous, the Indifferent, the Lukewarm, and Others*, with this motto from the great Bossuet: '*Those who are not for us are against us.*'"

"That is what Philemon says in the battles at the Chaumière, when he shakes his cane."

"Which proves that the genius of the Eagle of Meaux is universal. I only reproach him for having been jealous of Molière."

"Bah! actor's jealousy," said Rose-Pompon.

"Naughty girl!" cried Nini Moulin, threatening her with his finger.

"But if you are going to exterminate Madame de la Sainte-Colombe, who is somewhat lukewarm, how about your marriage?"

"My journal will advance it, on the contrary. Only think! editor-in-chief is a superb position; the sacristans will praise, and push, and support and bless me; I shall get La Sainte-Colombe, and then what a life I'll lead!"

At this moment a postman entered the shop and delivered a letter to the green-grocer, saying: "For M. Charlemagne, post-paid."

"My!" said Rose-Pompon; "it is for the little, mysterious old man who has such extraordinary ways. Does it come from far?"

"I believe you; it comes from Italy—from Rome," said Nini Moulin, looking in his turn at the letter, which the green-grocer held in her hand.

"Who is the astonishing little old man of whom you speak?"

"Just imagine to yourself, my great apostle," said Rose-Pompon, "a little old man who has two rooms at the bottom of that court. He never sleeps there, but comes from time to time and shuts himself up for hours, without ever allowing any one to enter his lodging and without any one knowing what he does there."

"He is a conspirator," said Nini Moulin, laughing, "or else a coiner."

"Poor, dear man," said Mother Arsène, "what has he done with his false money? He pays me always in sous for the bit of bread and the radish I furnish him for his breakfast."

"And what is the name of this mysterious chap?" asked Dumoulin.

"M. Charlemagne," said the green-grocer. "But look, when one speaks of the devil one is sure to see his horns."

"Where's the horns?"

"There, by the side of the house; that little old man who walks with his neck awry and his umbrella under his arm."

"M. Rodin!" ejaculated Nini Moulin, retreating hastily, and descending three steps into the shop in order not to be seen. Then he added:

"You say that this gentleman calls himself——"

"M. Charlemagne—do you know him?" asked the green-grocer.

"What the devil does he do here under a false name?" said Jacques Dumoulin to himself.

"You know him?" said Rose-Pompon, with impatience. "You are quite confused."

"And this gentleman has two rooms in this house, and comes here mysteriously," said Jacques Dumoulin, more and more surprised.

"Yes," resumed Rose-Pompon; "you can see his windows from Philémon's dove-cote."

"Quick! quick! let me get into the passage, that I may not meet him," said Dumoulin.

And without having been perceived by Rodin, he glided from the shop into the passage and thence mounted to the stairs which led to the apartment occupied by Rose-Pompon.

"Good-morning, M. Charlemagne," said Mother Arsène to Rodin, who made his appearance on the threshold. "You come twice in a day; that is right, for your visits are extremely rare."

"You are too polite, my good lady," said Rodin, with a very courteous bow; and he entered the shop of the green-grocer.

CHAPTER II

THE DEN

RODIN'S countenance, when he entered Mother Arsène's shop, was expressive of the most simple candor. He leaned his hands on the knob of his umbrella, and said: "I much regret, my good lady, that I roused you so early this morning."

"You do not come often enough, my dear sir, for me to find fault with you."

"How can I help it, my dear lady? I live in the country, and only come hither from time to time to settle my little affairs."

"Talking of that, sir, the letter you expected yesterday has arrived this morning. It is large, and comes from far. Here it is," said the green-grocer, drawing it from her pocket; "it cost nothing for postage."

"Thank you, my good lady," said Rodin, taking the letter with apparent indifference, and putting it into the side-pocket of his great coat, which he carefully buttoned over.

"Are you going up to your rooms, sir?"

"Yes, my good lady"

"Then I shall get ready your little provisions," said Mother Arsène, "as usual, I suppose, my dear sir?"

"Just as usual."

"It will be ready in the twinkling of an eye, sir."

So saying, the green-grocer took down an old basket; after throwing into it three or four pieces of turf, a little bundle of wood, and some charcoal, she covered all this fuel with a cabbage leaf; then going to the farther end of the shop, she took from a chest a large round loaf, cut off a slice, and selecting a magnificent radish with the eye of a connoisseur, divided it in two, made a hole in it, which she filled with gray salt, joined the two pieces together again, and placed it carefully by the side of the bread, on the cabbage leaf which separated the eatables from the combustibles. Finally, taking some embers from her stove, she put

them into a little earthen pot, containing ashes, which she placed also in the basket.

Then, re-ascending to her top step, Mother Arsène said to Rodin: "Here is your basket, sir."

"A thousand thanks, my good lady," answered Rodin; and, plunging his hand into the pocket of his trousers, he drew forth eight sous, which he counted out one by one to the green-grocer, and said to her, as he carried off his store: "Presently, when I come down again, I will return your basket as usual."

"Quite at your service, my dear sir, quite at your service," said Mother Arsène.

Rodin tucked his umbrella under his left arm, took up the green-grocer's basket with his right hand, entered the dark passage, crossed the little court, and mounted with light step to the second story of a dilapidated building; there, drawing a key from his pocket, he opened a door, which he locked carefully after him.

The first of the two rooms which he occupied was completely unfurnished; as for the second, it is impossible to imagine a more gloomy and miserable den.

Papering so much worn, torn, and faded that no one could recognize its primitive color bedecked the walls. A wretched flock-bed, covered with a moth-fretted blanket; a stool, and a little table of worm-eaten wood; an earthenware stove, as cracked as old china; a trunk, with a padlock, placed under the bed — such was the furniture of this desolate hole. A narrow window with dirty panes hardly gave any light to this room, which was almost deprived of air by the height of the building in front; two old cotton pocket-handkerchiefs, fastened together with pins and made to slide upon a string stretched across the window, served for curtains. The plaster of the roof, coming through the broken and disjointed tiles, showed the extreme neglect of the inhabitant of this abode.

After locking his door, Rodin threw his hat and umbrella on the bed, placed his basket on the ground, set the radish and bread on the table, and, kneeling down before his stove, stuffed it with fuel, and lighted it by blowing with vigorous lungs on the embers contained in his earthen pot.

When, to use the consecrated expression, the stove began to draw, Rodin spread out the handkerchiefs which served him for curtains; then, thinking himself quite safe from every eye, he took from the side-pocket of his great-coat the letter that Mother Arsène had given him. In doing so, he brought out several papers and different articles; one of these papers, folded into a thick and rumpled packet, fell upon the

table and flew open. It contained a silver cross of the Legion of Honor, black with time. The red ribbon of this cross had almost entirely lost its original color.



At sight of this cross, which he replaced in his pocket with the medal of which Faringhea had despoiled Djalma, Rodin shrugged his shoulders with a contemptuous and sardonic air; then, producing his

large silver watch, he laid it on the table by the side of the letter from Rome.

He looked at this letter with a singular mixture of suspicion and hope, of fear and impatient curiosity.

After a moment's reflection, he prepared to unseal the envelope, but suddenly he threw it down again upon the table, as if, by a strange caprice, he had wished to prolong for a few minutes that agony of uncertainty, as poignant and irritating as the emotion of the gambler.

Looking at his watch, Rodin resolved not to open the letter until the hand should mark half-past nine, of which it still wanted seven minutes.

In one of those whims of puerile fatalism, from which great minds have not been exempt, Rodin said to himself: "I burn with impatience to open this letter. If I do not open it till half-past nine, the news will be favorable."

To employ those minutes, Rodin took several turns up and down the room, and stood in admiring contemplation before two old prints, stained with damp and age, and fastened to the wall by rusty nails.

The first of these works of art—the only ornaments with which Rodin had decorated this hole—was one of those coarse pictures, illuminated with red, yellow, green, and blue, such as are sold at fairs; an Italian inscription announced that this print had been manufactured at Rome. It represented a woman covered with rags, bearing a wallet, and having a little child upon her knees; a horrible hag of a fortune-teller held in her hands the hand of the little child, and seemed to read there his future fate, for these words in large blue letters issued from her mouth: "*Sara Papa*" (he shall be Pope).

The second of these works of art, which appeared to inspire Rodin with deep meditations, was an excellent etching, whose careful finish and bold, correct drawing contrasted singularly with the coarse coloring of the other picture. This rare and splendid engraving, which had cost Rodin six louis (an enormous expense for him), represented a young boy dressed in rags. The ugliness of his features was compensated by the intellectual expression of his strongly marked countenance. Seated on a stone, surrounded by a herd of swine, that he seemed employed in keeping, he was seen in front, with his elbow resting on his knee and his chin in the palm of his hand.

The pensive and reflective attitude of this young man, dressed as a beggar, the power expressed in his large forehead, the acuteness of his penetrating glance, and the firm lines of the mouth seemed to reveal indomitable resolution, combined with superior intelligence and ready craft. Beneath this figure, the emblems of the papacy encircled a

medallion, in the center of which was the head of an old man, the lines of which, strongly marked, recalled in a striking manner, notwithstanding their look of advanced age, the features of the young swineherd.

This engraving was entitled THE YOUTH OF SIXTUS V.; the colored print was entitled *The Prediction*.

In contemplating these prints more and more nearly, with ardent and inquiring eye, as though he had asked for hopes or inspirations from them, Rodin had come so close that, still standing, with his right arm bent behind his head, he rested, as it were, against the wall, while, hiding his left hand in the pocket of his black trousers, he thus held back one of the flaps of his olive great-coat. For some minutes he remained in this meditative attitude.

Rodin, as we have said, came seldom to this lodging; according to the rules of his Order, he had till now lived with Father d'Aigrigny, whom he was specially charged to watch. No member of the society, particularly in the subaltern position which Rodin had hitherto held, could either shut himself in or possess an article of furniture made to lock. By this means nothing interferes with the mutual spy-system, incessantly carried on, which forms one of the most powerful resources of the Company of Jesus.

It was on account of certain combinations, purely personal to himself, though connected on some points with the interests of the Order, that Rodin, unknown to all, had taken these rooms in the Rue Clovis. And it was from the depths of this obscure den that the *Socius* corresponded directly with the most eminent and influential personages of the sacred college.

It has been told in the early part of this book how, on one occasion when Rodin wrote to Rome that Father d'Aigrigny, having received orders to quit France without seeing his dying mother, had hesitated to set out, the *Socius* had added, in form of postscriptum, at the bottom of the letter denouncing to the General of the Order the hesitation of Father d'Aigrigny:

"Tell the Prince Cardinal that he may rely upon me, but I hope for his active aid in return."

This familiar manner of corresponding with the most powerful dignitary of the Order, the almost patronizing tone of the recommendation that Rodin addressed to the Prince Cardinal, proved that the *Socius*, notwithstanding his apparently subaltern position, was looked upon at that epoch as a very important personage by many of the princes of the Church, who wrote to him at Paris under a false name, making use of a cipher and other customary precautions.

After some moments passed in contemplation before the portrait of Sixtus V., Rodin returned slowly to the table, on which lay the letter which, by a sort of superstitious delay, he had deferred opening, notwithstanding his extreme curiosity.

As it still wanted some minutes of half-past nine, Rodin, in order not to lose time, set about making preparations for his frugal breakfast. He placed on the table, by the side of an inkstand furnished with pens, the slice of bread and the radish; then, seating himself on his stool, with the stove, as it were, between his legs, he drew a horn-handled knife from his pocket, and, cutting alternately a morsel of bread and a morsel of radish with the sharp, well-worn blade, he began his temperate repast with a vigorous appetite, keeping his eye fixed on the hand of his watch. When it reached the momentous hour he unsealed the envelope with a trembling hand.

It contained two letters. The first appeared to give him little satisfaction; for, after some minutes, he shrugged his shoulders, struck the table impatiently with the handle of his knife, disdainfully pushed aside the letter with the back of his dirty hand, and perused the second epistle, holding his bread in one hand, and with the other mechanically dipping a slice of radish into the gray salt spilt on a corner of the table.

Suddenly Rodin's hand remained motionless. As he progressed in his reading, he appeared more and more interested, surprised, and struck.

Rising abruptly, he ran to the window, as if to assure himself, by a second examination of the cipher, that he was not deceived. The news announced to him in the letter seemed to be unexpected.

No doubt Rodin found that he had deciphered correctly, for, letting fall his arms, not in dejection, but with the stupor of a satisfaction as unforeseen as extraordinary, he remained for some time with his head down and his eyes fixed—the only mark of joy that he gave being manifested by a loud, frequent, and prolonged respiration.

Men who are as audacious in their ambition as they are patient and obstinate in their mining and countermining, are surprised at their own success, when this latter precedes and surpasses their wise and prudent expectations.

Rodin was now in this case. Thanks to prodigies of craft, address, and dissimulation, thanks to mighty promises of corruption, thanks to the singular mixture of admiration, fear, and confidence with which his genius inspired many influential persons, Rodin now learned from members of the pontifical government that, in case of a possible and probable occurrence, he might, within a given time, aspire with a good chance of success to a position which has too often excited the fear, the hate,

or the envy of many sovereigns, and which has, in turn, been occupied by great, good men, by abominable scoundrels, and by persons risen from the lowest grades of society.

But for Rodin to attain this end with certainty, it was absolutely necessary for him to succeed in that project which he had undertaken to accomplish without violence and only by the play and the rebound of passions skillfully managed. The project was: *To secure for the Society of Jesus the fortune of the Rennepont family.*

This possession would thus have a double and immense result; for Rodin, acting in accordance with his personal views, intended to make of his Order (whose chief was at his discretion) a stepping-stone and a means of intimidation.

When his first impression of surprise had passed away,—an impression that was only a sort of modesty of ambition and self-diffidence, not uncommon with men of really superior powers,—Rodin looked more coldly and logically on the matter, and almost reproached himself for his surprise. But soon after, by a singular contradiction, yielding to one of those puerile and absurd ideas by which men are often carried away when they think themselves alone and unobserved, Rodin rose abruptly, took the letter which had caused him such glad surprise, and went to display it, as it were, before the eyes of the young swineherd in the picture; then, shaking his head proudly and triumphantly, casting his reptile glance on the portrait, he muttered between his teeth, as he placed his dirty finger on the pontifical emblem: “Eh, brother? and I also—perhaps!”

After this ridiculous interpolation, Rodin returned to his seat, and, as if the happy news he had just received had increased his appetite, he placed the letter before him, to read it once more, while he exercised his teeth with a sort of joyous fury on his hard bread and radish, chanting an old air from a litany

There was something strange, great, and, above all, frightful in the contrast afforded by this immense ambition, already almost justified by events, and contained, as it were, in so miserable an abode.

Father d'Aigrigny, who, if not a very superior man, had at least some real value, was a person of high birth, very haughty, and placed in the best society, would never have ventured to aspire to what Rodin thus looked to from the first. The only aim of Father d'Aigrigny, and even this he thought presumptuous, was to be one day elected general of his Order—that Order which embraced the world.

The difference of the ambitious aptitudes of these two personages is conceivable. When a man of eminent abilities, of a healthy and viva-

cious nature, concentrates all the strength of his mind and body upon a single point, remaining, like Rodin, obstinately chaste and frugal, and renouncing every gratification of the heart and the senses — the man, who revolts against the sacred designs of his Creator, does so almost always in favor of some monstrous and devouring passion ; some infernal divinity, which, by a sacrilegious pact, asks of him in return for the bestowal of formidable power the destruction of every noble sentiment, and of all those ineffable attractions and tender instincts with which the Maker, in his eternal wisdom and inexhaustible munificence, has so paternally endowed his creatures.

.
During the dumb scene that we have just described, Rodin had not perceived that the curtain of a window on the third story of the building opposite had been partially drawn aside and had half revealed the sprightly face of Rose-Pompon and the Silenus-like countenance of Nini Moulin. It ensued that Rodin, notwithstanding his barricade of cotton handkerchiefs, had not been completely sheltered from the indiscreet and curious examination of the two dancers of the Full-blown Tulip.

CHAPTER III

AN UNEXPECTED VISIT

THOUGH Rodin had experienced much surprise on reading the second letter from Rome, he did not choose that his answer should betray any such amazement. Having finished his frugal breakfast, he took a sheet of paper and rapidly wrote in cipher the following note, in the short, abrupt style that was natural to him when not obliged to restrain himself:

"The information does not surprise me. I had foreseen it all. Indecision and cowardice always bear such fruit. This is not enough. Heretical Russia murders Catholic Poland. Rome blesses the murderers and curses the victims.

"Let it pass.

"In return, Russia guarantees to Rome, by Austria, the bloody suppression of the patriots of Romagna.

"That, too, is well.

"The cut-throat band of good Cardinal Albani is not sufficient for the massacre of the impious liberals. They are weary of the task.

"Not so well. They must go on."

When Rodin had written these last words, his attention was suddenly attracted by the clear and sonorous voice of Rose-Pompon, who, knowing her Béranger by heart, had opened Philemon's window, and, seated on the sill, sang with much grace and prettiness this verse of the immortal song-writer:

"How wrong you are! And dare you cry
That heaven ever scowls on earth?
The earth that laughs up to the sky,
The earth that owes it joy and birth?
Oh, may the wine from vines it warms,
May holy love thence flutt'ring down,
Lend my philosophy their charms,
To drive away Care's direful frown!
So, firm let's stand,
Full glass in hand,
And all evoke
The God of honest folk!"

This song, in its divine gentleness, contrasted so strangely with the cold cruelty of the few lines written by Rodin, that he started and bit

his lips with rage, as he recognized the words of the great poet, truly Christian, who had dealt such rude blows to the false Church.

Rodin waited for some moments with angry impatience, thinking the voice would continue; but Rose-Pompon was silent, or only continued to hum, and soon changed to another air, that of the *Good Pope*, which she intoned, but without words.

Rodin, not venturing to look out of his window to see who was this troublesome warbler, shrugged his shoulders, resumed his pen, and continued:

"To it again. We must exasperate the independent spirits in all countries — excite *philosophic* rage all over Europe — make liberalism foam at the mouth — raise all that is wild and noisy against Rome. To effect this, we must proclaim in the face of the world these three propositions: (1) It is abominable to assert that a man may be saved in any faith whatever, provided his morals be pure. (2) It is odious and absurd to grant liberty of conscience to the people. (3) The liberty of the press cannot be held in too much horror.

"We must bring the *Weak Man* to declare these propositions in every respect orthodox — show him their good effect upon despotic governments — upon true Catholics, the muzzlers of the people. He will fall into the snare. The propositions once published, the storm will burst forth. A general rising against Rome — a wide schism — the sacred college divided into three parties. One approves — the other blames — the third trembles. The *Sick Man*, still more frightened than he is now at having allowed the destruction of Poland, will shrink from the clamors, reproaches, threats, and violent ruptures that he has occasioned.

"That is well — and goes far.

"Then, set the Pope to shaking the conscience of the *Sick Man*, to disturb his mind and terrify his soul.

"To sum up. Make everything bitter to him — divide his counsel — isolate him — frighten him — redouble the ferocious ardor of good Albani — revive the appetite of the Sanfedists — give them a glut of liberals — let there be pillage, rape, massacre, as at Cesena — a downright river of Carbonaro blood — the *Sick Man* will have a surfeit of it. So many butcheries in his name — he will shrink, be sure he will shrink — every day will have its remorse, every night its terror, every minute its anguish; and the abdication he already threatens will come at last — perhaps too soon. That is now the only danger; you must provide against it.

"In case of an abdication, the grand penitentiary has understood me. Instead of confiding to a general the direction of our Order, the best militia of the Holy See, I should command it myself. Thenceforward this militia would give me no uneasiness. For instance: the Janissaries and the Prætorian Guards were always fatal to authority — why? — because they were able to organize themselves as defenders of the government, independently of the government; hence their power of intimidation.

"Clement XIV was a fool. To brand and abolish our Company was an absurd fault. To protect and make it harmless by declaring himself the general of the Order is what he should have done. The Company, then at his mercy, would have consented to anything. He would have absorbed us, made us vassals of the Holy See, and would no longer have had to fear *our services*. Clement XIV died of the colic. Let him heed who hears. In a similar case, I should not die the same death."

Just then the clear and liquid voice of Rose-Pompon was again



RODIN'S SECRET QUARTERS.

heard. Rodin bounded with rage upon his seat; but soon, as he listened to the following verse, new to him (for, unlike Philemon's widow, he had not his Béranger at his fingers' ends), the Jesuit, accessible to certain odd superstitious notions, was confused and almost frightened at so singular a coincidence. It is Béranger's *Good Pope* who speaks:

“What are monarchs? fools and sots!
 Knaves and robbers, puffed with pride,
 Wearing badges of crime-blots,
 Till their certain graves gape wide.
 If they'll pour out coin for me,
 I'll absolve them — skin and bone!
 If they haggle — they shall see
 My *nieces* dancing on their throne!
 So laugh away!
 Leap, my fay!
 Only watch *me* hurl the thunder
 First of all, but, Zeus under,
 I'm the Pope, the whole world's wonder!”

Rodin, half risen from his chair, with outstretched neck and attentive eye, was still listening when Rose-Pompon, flitting like a bee from flower to flower of her *repertoire*, had already begun the delightful air of *Colibri*.

Hearing no more, the Jesuit reseated himself in a sort of stupor; but after some minutes' reflection his countenance again brightened up and he seemed to see a lucky omen in this singular incident. He resumed his pen, and the first words he wrote partook, as it were, of this strange confidence in fate:

“I have never had more hope of success than at this moment. Another reason to neglect nothing. Every presentiment demands redoubled zeal. A new thought occurred to me yesterday.

“We shall act here in concert. I have founded an ultra-Catholic paper, called *Neigh-borly Love*. From its ultramontane, tyrannical, libticideal fury, it will be thought the organ of Rome. I will confirm these reports. They will cause new terrors.

“That will be well.

“I shall raise the question of the liberty of instruction. The raw liberals will support us. Like fools, they admit us to equal rights; when our privileges, our influence of the confessional, our obedience to Rome, all place us beyond the circle of equal rights, by the advantages which we enjoy. Double fools! they think us disarmed, because they have disarmed themselves toward us.

“A burning question — irritating clamors — new cause of disgust for the *Weak Man*. Every little makes a mickle.

“That also is very well.

“To sum up all in two words. The *end* is abdication; the *means*, vexation, incessant torture. The Rennepont inheritance will pay for the election. The price agreed, the merchandise will be sold.”

Rodin here paused abruptly, thinking he had heard some noise at

that door of his, which opened on the staircase; therefore he listened with suspended breath; but all remaining silent, he thought he must have been deceived, and took up his pen:

"I will take care of the Rennepont business: the hinge on which will turn our *temporal* operations. We must begin from the foundation — substitute the play of interests and the springs of passion for the stupid club-law of Father d'Aigrigny. He nearly compromised everything, and yet he has good parts, knows the world, has powers of seduction, quick insight — but plays ever in a single key, and is not great enough to make himself little. In his stead, I shall know how to make use of him. There is good stuff in the man. I availed myself in time of the full powers given by the R. F. G.; I may inform Father d'Aigrigny, in case of need, of the secret engagements taken by the General toward myself. Until now, I have let him invent for this inheritance the destination that you know of. A good thought, but unseasonable. The same end, by other means.

"The information was false. There are over two hundred millions. Should the eventuality occur, what was doubtful must become certain. An immense latitude is left us. The Rennepont business is now doubly mine, and within three months the two hundred millions will be ours, by the free will of the heirs themselves. It must be so; for, this failing, the temporal part would escape me, and my chances be diminished by one-half. I have asked for full powers; time presses, and I act as if I had them. One piece of information is indispensable for the success of my projects. I expect it from you, and I must have it; do you understand me? The powerful influence of your brother at the Court of Vienna will serve you in this. I wish to have the most precise details as to the present position of the Duke de Reichstadt — the Napoleon II. of the Imperialists. Is it possible, by means of your brother, to open a secret correspondence with the prince, unknown to his attendants?

"Look to this promptly. It is urgent. This note will be sent off to-day. I shall complete it to-morrow. It will reach you, as usual, by the hands of the petty shop-keeper."

At the moment when Rodin was sealing this letter within a double envelope, he thought that he again heard a noise at the door. He listened. After some silence several knocks were distinctly audible.

Rodin started. It was the first time any one had knocked at his door since nearly a twelve-month that he occupied this room. Hastily placing the letter in his great-coat pocket, the Jesuit opened the old trunk under his bed, took from it a packet of papers wrapped in a tattered cotton handkerchief, added to them the two letters in cipher he had just received, and carefully relocked the trunk.

The knocking continued without, and seemed to show more and more impatience. Rodin took the green-grocer's basket in his hand, tucked his umbrella under his arm, and went with some uneasiness to ascertain who was this unexpected visitor. He opened the door and found himself face to face with Rose-Pompon, the troublesome singer, and who now, with a light and pretty courtesy, said to him in the most guileless manner in the world:

"M. Rodin, if you please?"

CHAPTER IV

FRIENDLY SERVICES



NOTWITHSTANDING his surprise and uneasiness, Rodin did not frown. He began by locking his door after him as he noticed the young girl's inquisitive glance. Then he said to her good-naturedly, "Who do you want, my dear?"

"M. Rodin," repeated Rose-Pompon stoutly, opening her bright blue eyes to their full extent and looking Rodin full in the face.

"It's not here," said he, moving toward the stairs. "I do not know him. Inquire above or below."

"No, you don't! giving yourself airs at your age!" said Rose-Pompon, shrugging her shoulders. "As if we did not know that you are M. Rodin."

"Charlemagne," said the *Socius*, bowing; "Charlemagne, to serve you—if I am able."

"You are not able," answered Rose-Pompon majestically; then she added, with a mocking air: "So, we have our little pussy-cat hiding-places; we change our name; we are afraid Mamma Rodin will find us out."

"Come, my dear child," said the *Socius*, with a paternal smile; "you have come to the right quarter. I am an old man, but I love youth—happy, joyous youth! Amuse yourself, pray, at my expense. Only let me pass, for I am in a hurry." And Rodin again advanced toward the stairs.

"M. Rodin," said Rose-Pompon, in a solemn voice, "I have very important things to say to you, and advice to ask about a love affair."

"Why, little madcap that you are! have you nobody to tease in your own house that you must come here?"

"I lodge in this house, M. Rodin," answered Rose-Pompon, laying a malicious stress on the name of her victim.

"You? Oh, dear, only to think I did not know I had such a pretty neighbor."

"Yes, I have lodged here six months, M. Rodin."

"Really! where?"

"On the third story, front, M. Rodin."

"It was you, then, that sang so well just now?"

"Rather."

"You gave me great pleasure, I must say."

"You are very polite, M. Rodin."

"You lodge, I suppose, with your respectable family?"

"I believe you, M. Rodin," said Rose-Pompon, casting down her eyes with a timid air. "I lodge with Grandpapa Philemon and Grandmamma Bacchanal, who is a queen, and no mistake."

Rodin had hitherto been seriously uneasy, not knowing in what manner Rose had discovered his real name. But on hearing her mention the Bacchanal Queen, with the information that she lodged in the house, he found something to compensate for the disagreeable incident of Rose-Pompon's appearance. It was, indeed, important for Rodin to find out the Bacchanal Queen, the mistress of Sleepinbuff and the sister of Mother Bunch, who had been noted as dangerous since her interview with the superior of the convent and the part she had taken in the projected escape of Mademoiselle de Cardoville. Moreover, Rodin hoped—thanks to what he had just heard—to bring Rose-Pompon to confess to him the name of the person from whom she had learned that "Charlemagne" masked "Rodin."

Hardly had the young girl pronounced the name of the Bacchanal Queen than Rodin clasped his hands, and appeared as much surprised as interested.

"Oh, my dear child!" he exclaimed, "I conjure you not to jest on this subject. Are you speaking of a young girl who bears that nickname, the sister of a deformed needle-woman?"

"Yes, sir, the Bacchanal Queen is her nickname," said Rose-Pompon, astonished in her turn; "she is really Cephyse Soliveau, and she is my friend."

"Oh! she is your friend?" said Rodin, reflecting.

"Yes, sir, my bosom friend."

"So you love her?"

"Like a sister. Poor girl! I do what I can for her, and that's not much. But how comes it that a respectable man of your age should know the Bacchanal Queen?—Ah! that shows you have a false name!"

"My dear child, I am no longer inclined to laugh," said Rodin, with so sorrowful an air that Rose-Pompon, reproaching herself with her pleasantry, said to him:

"But how comes it that you know Cephyse?"

"Alas! I do not know her; but a young fellow that I like excessively —"

"Jacques Rennepont!"

"Otherwise called Sleepinbuff. He is now in prison for debt," sighed Rodin. "I saw him yesterday."

"You saw him yesterday?—how strange," said Rose-Pompon, clapping her hands. "Quick! quick! come over to Philemon's to give Cephyse news of her lover. She is so uneasy about him."

"My dear child, I should like to give her good news of that worthy fellow, whom I like in spite of his follies, for who has not been guilty of follies?" added Rodin, with indulgent good-nature.

"To be sure," said Rose-Pompon, twisting about as if she still wore the costume of a *débardeur*.

"I will say more," added Rodin: "I love him because of his follies; for, talk as we may, my dear child, there is always something good at bottom, a good heart, or something, in those who spend generously their money for other people."

"Well, come! you are a very good sort of man," said Rose-Pompon, enchanted with Rodin's philosophy. "But why will you not come and see Cephyse, and talk to her of Jacques?"

"Of what use would it be to tell her what she knows already—that Jacques is in prison? What I should like would be to get the worthy fellow out of his scrape."

"Oh, sir! only do that, only get Jacques out of prison," cried Rose-Pompon warmly, "and we will both give you a kiss—me and Cephyse!"

"It would be throwing kisses away, dear little madcap!" said Rodin, smiling. "But be satisfied, I want no reward to induce me to do good when I can."

"Then you hope to get Jacques out of prison?"

Rodin shook his head, and answered with a grieved and disappointed air: "I did hope it. Certainly, I did hope it; but now all is changed."

"How is that?" asked Rose-Pompon, with surprise.

"That foolish joke of calling me M. Rodin may appear very amusing to you, my dear child. I understand it, you being only an echo. Some one has said to you: 'Go and tell M. Charlemagne that he is one M. Rodin; that will be very funny!'"

"Certainly, I should never myself have thought of calling you M. Rodin. One does not invent such names," answered Rose-Pompon.

"Well! that person, with his foolish jokes, has done, without knowing it, a great injury to Jacques Rennepont."

"What! because I called you Rodin instead of Charlemagne?" cried Rose-Pompon, much regretting the pleasantry which she had carried on at the instigation of Nini Moulin. "But really, sir," she added, "what can this joke have to do with the service that you were about to render Jacques?"

"I am not at liberty to tell you, my child. In truth, I am very sorry for poor Jacques. Believe me, I am; but do let me pass."

"Listen to me, sir, I beg," said Rose-Pompon; "if I told you the name of the person who told me to call you Rodin, would you interest yourself again for Jacques?"

"I do not wish to know any one's secrets, my dear child. In all this, you have been the echo of persons who are, perhaps, very dangerous; and, notwithstanding the interest I feel for Jacques Rennepont, I do not wish, you understand, to make myself enemies. Heaven forbid!"

Rose-Pompon did not at all comprehend Rodin's fears, and upon this he had counted; for, after a second's reflection, the young girl resumed:

"Well, sir, this is too deep for me; I do not understand it. All I know is, that I am truly sorry if I have injured a good young man by a mere joke. I will tell you exactly how it happened. My frankness may be of some use."

"Frankness will often clear up the most obscure matters," said Rodin sententially

"After all," said Rose-Pompon, "it's Nini's fault. Why does he tell me nonsense that might injure poor Cephyse's lover? You see, sir, it happened in this way. Nini Moulin, who is fond of a joke, saw you just now in the street. The portress told him that your name was Charlemagne. He said to me: 'No; his name is Rodin. We must play him a trick. Go to his room, Rose-Pompon, knock at the door, and call him M. Rodin. You will see what a rum face he will make.' I promised Nini Moulin not to name him; but I do it, rather than run the risk of injuring Jacques."

At Nini Moulin's name Rodin had not been able to repress a movement of surprise. This pamphleteer, whom he had employed to edit the *Neighborly Love*, was not personally formidable; but, being fond of talking in his drink, he might become troublesome, particularly if Rodin, as was probable, had often to visit this house, to execute his project upon Sleepinbuff, through the medium of the Bacchanal Queen. The *Socius* resolved, therefore, to provide against this inconvenience.

"So, my dear child," said he to Rose-Pompon, "it is a M. Desmoulin that persuaded you to play off this silly joke?"

"Not Desmoulin, but Dumoulin," corrected Rose. "He writes in the pewholders' papers, and defends the saints for money; for, if Nini Moulin is a saint, his patrons are Saint Drinkard and Saint Flashette, as he himself declares."

"This gentleman appears to be very gay."

"Oh! a very good fellow."

"But stop," resumed Rodin, appearing to recollect himself; "ain't he a man **about** thirty-six or forty, fat, with a ruddy complexion?"

"Ruddy as a glass of red wine," said Rose-Pompon, "and with a pimpled nose **like** a mulberry"



"That's the man — M Dumoulin. Oh! in that case, I am quite satisfied, my dear child. The jest no longer makes me uneasy; for M. Dumoulin is a very worthy man — only perhaps a little too fond of his joke."

"Then, sir, you will try to be useful to Jacques? The stupid pleantry of Nini Moulin will not prevent you?"

"I hope not."

"But I must not tell Nini Moulin that you know it was he who sent me to call you M. Rodin—eh, sir?"

"Why not? In every case, my dear child, it is always better to speak frankly the truth."

"But, sir, Nini Moulin so strongly recommended me not to name him to you ——"

"If you have named him, it is from a very good motive; why not avow it? However, my dear child, this concerns you, not me. Do as you think best."

"And may I tell Cephyse of your good intentions toward Jacques?"

"The truth, my dear child, always the truth. One need never hesitate to say what is."

"Poor Cephyse! how happy she will be!" cried Rose-Pompon cheerfully; "and the news will come just in time."

"Only you must not exaggerate; I do not promise positively to get this good fellow out of prison; I say that I will do what I can. But what I promise positively is—for, since the imprisonment of poor Jacques, your friend must be very much straitened ——"

"Alas, sir!"

"What I promise positively is some little assistance, which your friend will receive to-day, to enable her to live honestly; and if she behaves well—hereafter—why, hereafter, we shall see."

"Oh, sir! you do not know how welcome will be your assistance to poor Cephyse! One might fancy you were her actual good angel. Faith! you may call yourself Rodin or Charlemagne; all I know is that you are a nice, sweet ——"

"Come, come, do not exaggerate," said Rodin; "say a good sort of old fellow; nothing more, my dear child. But see how things fall out sometimes! Who could have told me when I heard you knock at my door—which, I must say, vexed me a great deal—that it was a pretty little neighbor of mine, who, under the pretext of playing off a joke, was to put me in the way of doing a good action? Go and comfort your friend; this evening she will receive some assistance; and let us have hope and confidence. Thanks be, there are still some good people in the world!"

"Oh, sir! you prove it yourself."

"Not at all! The happiness of the old is to see the young happy."

This was said by Rodin with so much apparent kindness that Rose-Pompon felt the tears well up to her eyes, and answered with much

emotion: "Sir, Cephyse and me are only poor girls; there are many more virtuous in the world; but I venture to say we have good hearts. Now, if ever you should be ill, only send for us; there are no Sisters of Charity that will take better care of you. It is all that we can offer you, without reckoning Philemon, who shall go through fire and water for you, I give you my word for it; and Cephyse, I am sure, will answer for Jacques also, that he will be yours in life and death."

"You see, my dear child, that I was right in saying—a fitful head and a good heart. Adieu, till we meet again."

Thereupon Rodin, taking up the basket, which he had placed on the ground by the side of his umbrella, prepared to descend the stairs.

"First of all, you must give me this basket; it will be in your way going down," said Rose-Pompon, taking the basket from the hands of Rodin, notwithstanding his resistance. Then she added: "Lean upon my arm. The stairs are so dark. You might slip."

"I will accept your offer, my dear child, for I am not very courageous." Leaning paternally on the right arm of Rose-Pompon, who held the basket in her left hand, Rodin descended the stairs and crossed the court-yard.

"Up there, on the third story, do you see that big face close to the window-frame?" said Rose-Pompon suddenly to Rodin, stopping in the center of the little court. "That is my Nini Moulin. Do you know him? Is he the same as yours?"

"The same as mine," said Rodin, raising his head and waving his hand very affectionately to Jacques Dumoulin, who, stupefied thereat, retired abruptly from the window.

"The poor fellow! I am sure he is afraid of me since his foolish joke," said Rodin, smiling. "He is very wrong."

And he accompanied these last words with a sinister nipping of the lips, not perceived by Rose-Pompon.

"And now, my dear child," said he, as they both entered the passage, "I no longer need your assistance; return to your friend, and tell her the good news you have heard."

"Yes, sir, you are right. I burn with impatience to tell her what a good man you are." And Rose-Pompon sprung toward the stairs.

"Stop, stop! how about my basket that the little madcap carries off with her!" said Rodin.

"Oh, true! I beg your pardon, sir. Poor Cephyse! how pleased she will be. Adieu, sir!" And Rose-Pompon's pretty figure disappeared in the darkness of the staircase, which she mounted with an alert and impatient step.

Rodin issued from the entry "Here is your basket, my good lady,"

said he, stopping at the threshold of Mother Arsène's shop. "I give you my humble thanks for your kindness."

"For nothing, my dear sir, for nothing. It is all at your service. Well! was the radish good?"

"Succulent, my dear madame, and excellent."

"Oh! I am glad of it. Shall we soon see you again?"

"I hope so. But could you tell me where is the nearest post-office?"

"Turn to the left, the third house at the grocer's."

"A thousand thanks."

"I wager it's a love-letter for your sweetheart," said Mother Arsène, enlivened probably by Rose-Pompon's and Nini Moulin's proximity.

"Ha! ha! ha! the good lady!" said Rodin, with a titter. Then, suddenly resuming his serious aspect, he made a low bow to the green-grocer, adding, "Your most obedient, humble servant!" and walked out into the street.

.

We now usher the reader into Dr. Baleinier's asylum, in which Mademoiselle de Cardoville was confined.

CHAPTER V

THE ADVISER



ADRIENNE DE CARDOVILLE had been still more strictly confined in Dr. Baleinier's house since the double nocturnal attempt of Agricola and Dagobert, in which the soldier, though severely wounded, had succeeded, thanks to the intrepid devotion of his son, seconded by the heroic *Spoilsport*, in gaining the little garden-gate of the convent, and escaping by way of the boulevard, along with the young smith.

Four o'clock had just struck. Adrienne, since the previous day, had been removed to a chamber on the second story of the asylum. The grated window, with closed shutters, only admitted a faint light to this apartment.

The young lady, since her interview with Mother Bunch, expected to be delivered any day by the intervention of her friends. But she felt painful uneasiness on the subject of Agricola and Dagobert, being absolutely ignorant of the issue of the struggle in which her intended liberators had been engaged with the people of the asylum and convent. She had in vain questioned her keepers on the subject; they had remained perfectly mute.

These new incidents had augmented the bitter resentment of Adrienne against the Princess de Saint-Dizier, Father d'Aigrigny, and their creatures.

The slight paleness of Mademoiselle de Cardoville's charming face, and her fine eyes a little drooping, betrayed her recent sufferings; seated before a little table, with her forehead resting upon one of her hands, half veiled by the long curls of her golden hair, she was turning over the leaves of a book.

Suddenly the door opened and M. Baleinier entered. The doctor, a Jesuit of the *short robe*, a docile and passive instrument of the will of his Order, was only half in the confidence of Father d'Aigrigny and the Princess de Saint-Dizier. He was ignorant of the object of the imprisonment of Mademoiselle de Cardoville; he was ignorant also of the

sudden change which had taken place in the relative position of Father d'Aigrigny and Rodin after the reading of the will of Marius de Rennepont. The doctor had, only the day before, received orders from Father d'Aigrigny (now acting under the directions of Rodin) to confine Mademoiselle de Cardoville still more strictly, to act toward her with redoubled severity, and to endeavor to force her, it will be seen by what expedients, to renounce the judicial proceedings which she promised herself to take hereafter against her persecutors.

At sight of the doctor, Mademoiselle de Cardoville could not hide the aversion and disdain with which this man inspired her.

M. Baleinier, on the contrary, always smiling, always courteous, approached Adrienne with perfect ease and confidence, stopped a few steps from her, as if to study her features more attentively, and then added, like a man who is satisfied with the observations he has made: "Come! the unfortunate events of the night before last have had a less injurious influence than I feared. There is some improvement; the complexion is less flushed, the look calmer, the eyes still somewhat too bright, but no longer shining with such unnatural fire. You were getting on so well! Now the cure must be prolonged, for this unfortunate night affair threw you into a state of excitement that was only the more dangerous from your not being conscious of it. Happily, with care, your recovery will not, I hope, be very much delayed."

Accustomed though she was to the audacity of this tool of the Company, Mademoiselle de Cardoville could not forbear saying to him, with a smile of bitter disdain: "What impudence, sir, there is in your probity! What effrontery in your zeal to earn your hire! Never for a moment do you lay aside your mask; craft and falsehood are ever on your lips. Really, if this shameful comedy causes you as much fatigue as it does me disgust and contempt, they can never pay you enough."

"Alas!" said the doctor, in a sorrowful tone; "always this unfortunate delusion that you are not in want of our care! that I am playing a part when I talk to you of the sad state in which you were when we were obliged to bring you hither by stratagem. Still, with the exception of this little sign of rebellious insanity, your condition has marvelously improved. You are on the high road to a complete cure. By and by, your excellent heart will render me the justice that is due to me; and, one day, I shall be judged as I deserve."

"I believe it, sir; the day approaches in which you *will be judged as you deserve*," said Adrienne, laying great stress upon the words.

"Always that other fixed idea," said the doctor, with a sort of commiseration. "Come, be reasonable. Do not think of this childishness."

"What! renounce my intention to demand at the hands of justice reparation for myself and disgrace for you and your accomplices? Never, sir—never!"

"Well!" said the doctor, shrugging his shoulders; "once at liberty, thank Heaven, you will have many other things to think of, my fair enemy."

"You forget piously the evil that you do; but I, sir, have a better memory."

"Let us talk seriously. Have you really the intention of applying to the courts?" inquired Dr. Baleinier, in a grave tone.

"Yes, sir; and you know that what I intend I firmly carry out."

"Well! I can only conjure you not to follow out this idea," replied the doctor, in a still more solemn tone; "I ask it as a favor, in the name of your own interest."

"I think, sir, that you are a little too ready to confound your interest with mine."

"Now, come," said Dr. Baleinier, with a feigned impatience, as if quite certain of convincing Mademoiselle de Cardoville on the instant; "would you have the melancholy courage to plunge into despair two persons full of goodness and generosity?"

"Only two? The jest would be complete if you were to reckon three,—you, sir, and my aunt and Abbé d'Aigrigny; for these are no doubt the generous persons in whose name you implore my pity."

"No, mademoiselle; I speak neither of myself nor of your aunt nor of Abbé d'Aigrigny."

"Of whom, then, sir?" asked Mademoiselle de Cardoville, with surprise.

"Of two poor fellows who, no doubt sent by those whom you call your friends, got into the neighboring convent the other night and thence into this garden. The guns which you heard go off were fired at them."

"Alas! I thought so. They refused to tell me if either of them was wounded," said Adrienne, with painful emotion.

"One of them received a wound, but not very serious, since he was able to fly and escape pursuit."

"Thank God!" cried Mademoiselle de Cardoville, clasping her hands with fervor.

"It is quite natural that you should rejoice at their escape, but by what strange contradiction do you now wish to put the officers of justice on their track? A singular manner, truly, of rewarding their devotion!"

"What do you say, sir?" asked Mademoiselle de Cardoville.

"For if they should be arrested," resumed Dr. Baleinier, without answering her, "as they have been guilty of house-breaking and attempted burglary, they would be sent to the galleys."

"Heavens! and for my sake!"

"Yes; it would be *for* you, and, what is worse, *by* you, that they would be condemned."

"By *me*, sir?"

"Certainly; that is, if you follow up your vengeance against your aunt and Abbé d'Aigrigny—I do not speak of myself, for I am quite safe; in a word, if you persist in laying your complaint before the magistrates that you have been unjustly confined in this house."

"I do not understand you, sir. Explain yourself," said Adrienne, with growing uneasiness.

"Child that you are!" cried the Jesuit of the short robe, with an air of conviction; "do you think that if the law once takes cognizance of this affair you can stop short its action where and when you please? When you leave this house, you lodge a complaint against me and against your family; well, what happens? The law interferes, inquires, calls witnesses, enters into the most minute investigations. Then, what follows? Why, that this nocturnal escalade, which the superior of the convent has some interest in hushing up, for fear of scandal—that this nocturnal attempt, I say, which I also would keep quiet, is necessarily divulged, and as it involves a serious crime, to which a heavy penalty is attached, the law will ferret into it, and find out these unfortunate men, and if, as is probable, they are detained in Paris by their duties or occupations, or even by a false security arising from the honorable motives which they know to have actuated them, they will be arrested. And who will be the cause of this arrest? You, by your deposition against us."

"Oh, sir! that would be horrible; but it is impossible."

"It is very possible, on the contrary," returned M. Baleinier; "so that, while I and the superior of the convent, who alone are really entitled to complain, only wish to keep quiet this unpleasant affair, it is you—you for whom these unfortunate men have risked the galleys—that will deliver them up to justice."

Though Mademoiselle de Cardoville was not completely duped by the lay Jesuit, she guessed that the merciful intentions which he expressed with regard to Dagobert and his son would be absolutely subordinate to the course she might take in pressing or abandoning the legitimate vengeance which she meant to claim of authority

Indeed, Rodin, whose instructions the doctor was following without knowing it, was too cunning to have it said to Mademoiselle de Cardoville, "If you attempt any proceedings, we denounce Dagobert and his

son," but he attained the same end by inspiring Adrienne with fears on the subject of her two liberators, so as to prevent her taking any hostile measures.



Without knowing the exact law on the subject, Mademoiselle de Cardoville had too much good sense not to understand that Dagobert and Agricola might be very seriously involved in consequence of their

nocturnal adventure, and might even find themselves in a terrible position. And yet, when she thought of all she had suffered in that house and of all the just resentment she entertained in the bottom of her heart, Adrienne felt unwilling to renounce the stern pleasure of exposing such odious machinations to the light of day.

Dr. Baleinier watched with sullen attention her whom he considered his dupe, for he thought he could divine the cause of the silence and hesitation of Mademoiselle de Cardoville.

"But, sir," resumed the latter, unable to conceal her anxiety, "if I were disposed, for whatever reason, to make no complaint, and to forget the wrongs I have suffered, when should I leave this place?"

"I cannot tell; that depends; for I do not know when you will be radically cured," said the doctor benignantly. "You are in a very good way, but ——"

"Still this insolent and stupid acting!" broke forth Mademoiselle de Cardoville, interrupting the doctor with indignation. "I ask and, if it must be, I entreat you to tell me how long I am to be shut up in this dreadful house, for I shall leave it some day, I suppose?"

"I hope so, certainly," said the Jesuit of the short robe, with unction; "but when, I am unable to say. Moreover, I must tell you frankly that every precaution is taken against such attempts as those of the other night; and the most vigorous watch will be maintained, to prevent your communicating with any one. And all this in your own interest, that your poor head may not again be dangerously excited."

"So, sir," said Adrienne, almost terrified, "compared with what awaits me, the last few days have been days of liberty."

"Your interest before everything," answered the doctor, in a fervent tone.

Mademoiselle de Cardoville, feeling the impotence of her indignation and despair, heaved a sigh and hid her face in her hands.

At this moment quick footsteps were heard in the passage, and one of the nurses entered, after having knocked at the door.

"Sir," she said to the doctor, with a frightened air, "there are two gentlemen below who wish to see you instantly, and the lady also."

Adrienne raised her head hastily; her eyes were bathed in tears.

"What are the names of these persons?" said M. Baleinier, much astonished.

"One of them said to me," answered the nurse: "'Go and inform Dr. Baleinier that I am a magistrate, and that I come on a duty regarding Mademoiselle de Cardoville.'"

"A magistrate!" exclaimed the Jesuit of the short robe, growing purple in the face and unable to hide his surprise and uneasiness.

"Heaven be praised!" cried Adrienne, rising with vivacity, her countenance beaming through her tears with hope and joy; "my friends have been informed in time, and the hour of justice is arrived?"

"Ask these persons to walk up," said Dr. Baleinier, after a moment's reflection. Then, with a still more agitated expression of countenance, he approached Adrienne with a harsh and almost menacing air, which contrasted with the habitual placidity of his hypocritical smile, and said to her in a low voice: "Take care, mademoiselle! do not rejoice too soon."

"I no longer fear you," answered Mademoiselle de Cardoville, with a bright, flashing eye. "M. de Montbron is no doubt returned to Paris and has been informed in time. He accompanies the magistrate and comes to deliver me. I pity you, sir—both you and yours," added Adrienne, with an accent of bitter irony.

"Mademoiselle," cried M. Baleinier, no longer able to dissemble his growing alarm, "I repeat to you, take care! Remember what I have told you. Your accusations would necessarily involve the discovery of what took place the other night. Beware! the fate of the soldier and his son is in your hands. Recollect they are in danger of the convict's chains."

"Oh! I am not your dupe, sir. You are holding out a covert menace. Have at least the courage to say to me that if I complain to the magistrates you will denounce the soldier and his son."

"I repeat that if you make any complaint those two people are lost," answered the doctor ambiguously.

Startled by what was really dangerous in the doctor's threats, Adrienne asked:

"Sir, if this magistrate questions me, do you think I will tell him a falsehood!"

"You will answer what is true," said M. Baleinier hastily, in the hope of still attaining his end. "You will answer that you were in so excited a state of mind a few days ago that it was thought advisable, for your own sake, to bring you hither, without your knowing it. But you are now so much better that you acknowledge the utility of the measures taken with regard to you. I will confirm these words; for, after all, it is the truth."

"Never!" cried Mademoiselle de Cardoville, with indignation; "never will I be the accomplice of so infamous a falsehood; never will I be base enough to justify the indignities that I have suffered!"

"Here is the magistrate," said M. Baleinier, as he caught the sound of approaching footsteps. "Beware!"

The door opened and, to the indescribable amazement of the doctor,

Rodin appeared on the threshold, accompanied by a man dressed in black, with a dignified and severe countenance.

In the interest of his projects, and from motives of craft and prudence that will hereafter be known, Rodin had not informed Father d'Aigrigny, and consequently the doctor, of the unexpected visit he intended to pay to the asylum, accompanied by a magistrate. On the contrary, he had only the day before given orders to M. Baleinier to confine Mademoiselle de Cardoville still more strictly.

Imagine, then, the stupor of the doctor when he saw the judicial officer, whose unexpected presence and imposing aspect were otherwise sufficiently alarming, enter the room, accompanied by Rodin, Abbé d'Aigrigny's humble and obscure secretary.

From the door, Rodin, who was very shabbily dressed, as usual, pointed out Mademoiselle de Cardoville to the magistrate by a gesture at once respectful and compassionate. Then, while the latter, who had not been able to repress a movement of admiration at sight of the rare beauty of Adrienne, seemed to examine her with as much surprise as interest, the Jesuit modestly receded several steps.

Dr. Baleinier, in his extreme astonishment, hoping to be understood by Rodin, made suddenly several private signals, as if to interrogate him on the cause of the magistrate's visit. But this was only productive of fresh amazement to M. Baleinier; for Rodin did not appear to recognize him, or to understand his expressive pantomime, and looked at him with affected bewilderment. At length, as the doctor, growing impatient, redoubled his mute questionings, Rodin advanced with a stride, stretched forward his crooked neck, and said in a loud voice: "What is your pleasure, doctor?"

These words, which completely disconcerted Baleinier, broke the silence which had reigned for some seconds, and the magistrate turned round. Rodin added, with imperturbable coolness: "Since our arrival the doctor has been making all sorts of mysterious signs to me. I suppose he has something private to communicate, but as I have no secrets, I must beg him to speak out loud."

This reply, so embarrassing for M. Baleinier, uttered in a tone of aggression and with an air of icy coldness, plunged the doctor into such new and deep amazement that he remained for some moments without answering. No doubt the magistrate was struck with this incident and with the silence which followed it, for he cast a look of great severity on the doctor. Mademoiselle de Cardoville, who had expected to have seen M. de Montbron, was also singularly surprised.

CHAPTER VI

THE ACCUSER

BALEINIER, disconcerted for a moment by the unexpected presence of a magistrate and by Rodin's inexplicable attitude, soon recovered his presence of mind, and, addressing his colleague of the longer robe, said to him: "If I made signs to you, sir, it was that, while I wished to respect the silence which this gentleman"—glancing at the magistrate—"has preserved since his entrance, I desired to express my surprise at the unexpected honor of this visit."

"It is to the lady that I will explain the reason for my silence, and beg her to excuse it," replied the magistrate as he made a half bow to Adrienne, whom he thus continued to address: "I have just received so serious a declaration with regard to you, mademoiselle, that I could not forbear looking at you for a moment in silence, to see if I could read in your countenance or in your attitude the truth or falsehood of the accusation that has been placed in my hands; and I have every reason to believe that it is but too well founded."

"May I at length be informed, sir," said Dr. Baleinier, in a polite but firm tone, "to whom I have the honor of speaking?"

"Sir, I am a *juge d'instruction*, and I have come to inform myself as to a fact which has been pointed out to me —"

"Will you do me the honor to explain yourself, sir?" said the doctor, bowing.

"Sir," resumed the magistrate, M. de Gernande, a man of about fifty years of age, full of firmness and straightforwardness, and knowing how to unite the austere duties of his position with benevolent politeness, "you are accused of having committed—a very great error, not to use a harsher expression. As for the nature of that error, I prefer believing, sir, that you, a first-rate man of science, may have been deceived in the diagnosis of a medical case, rather than suspect you of having forgotten all that is sacred in the exercise of a profession that is almost a priesthood."

"When you specify the facts, sir," answered the Jesuit of the short robe, with a degree of haughtiness, "it will be easy for me to prove that my reputation as a man of science is no less free from reproach than my conscience as a man of honor."

"Mademoiselle," said M. de Gernande, addressing Adrienne, "is it true that you were conveyed to this house by stratagem?"

"Sir," cried M. Baleinier, "permit me to observe that the manner in which you open this question is an insult to me."

"Sir, it is to the lady that I have the honor of addressing myself," replied M. de Gernande sternly; "and I am the sole judge of the propriety of *my* questions."

Adrienne was about to answer affirmatively to the magistrate, when an expressive look from Dr. Baleinier reminded her that she would perhaps expose Dagobert and his son to cruel dangers. It was no base and vulgar feeling of vengeance by which Adrienne was animated, but a legitimate indignation, inspired by odious hypocrisy. She would have thought it cowardly not to unmask the criminals; but wishing to avoid compromising others, she said to the magistrate, with an accent full of mildness and dignity:

"Permit me, sir, in my turn, rather to ask you a question."

"Speak, mademoiselle."

"Will the answer I make be considered a formal accusation?"

"I have come hither, mademoiselle, to ascertain the truth, and no consideration should induce you to dissemble it."

"So be it, sir," resumed Adrienne; "but suppose, having just causes of complaint, I lay them before you, in order to be allowed to leave this house, shall I afterward be at liberty not to press the accusations I have made?"

"You may abandon proceedings, mademoiselle, but the law will take up your cause in the name of society, if its rights have been injured in your person."

"Shall I then not be allowed to pardon? Should I not be sufficiently avenged by a contemptuous forgetfulness of the wrongs I have suffered?"

"Personally, mademoiselle, you may forgive and forget; but I have the honor to repeat to you that society cannot show the same indulgence, if it should turn out that you have been a victim of a criminal machination — and I have every reason to fear it is so. The manner in which you express yourself, the generosity of your sentiments, the calmness and dignity of your attitude, convince me that I have been well informed."

"I hope, sir," said Dr. Baleinier, recovering his coolness, "that you will at least communicate the declaration that has been made to you."

"It has been declared to me, sir," said the magistrate in a stern voice, "that Mademoiselle de Cardoville was brought here by stratagem."

"By stratagem?"

"Yes, sir."

"It is true. The lady *was* brought here by stratagem," answered the Jesuit of the short robe, after a moment's silence.

"You confess it, then?" said M. de Gernande.

"Certainly I do, sir. I admit that I had recourse to means which we are unfortunately too often obliged to employ, when persons who most need our assistance are unconscious of their own sad state."

"But, sir," replied the magistrate, "it has also been declared to me that Mademoiselle de Cardoville never required such aid."

"That, sir, is a question of medical jurisprudence which has to be examined and discussed," said M. Baleinier, recovering his assurance.

"It will, indeed, sir, be seriously discussed; for you are accused of confining Mademoiselle de Cardoville while in the full possession of all her faculties."

"And may I ask you for what purpose?" said M. Baleinier, with a slight shrug of the shoulders and in a tone of irony "What interest had I to commit such a crime, even admitting that my reputation did not place me above so odious and absurd a charge?"

"You are said to have acted, sir, in furtherance of a family plot, devised against Mademoiselle de Cardoville for a pecuniary motive."

"And who has dared, sir, to make so calumnious a charge?" cried Dr. Baleinier, with indignant warmth. "Who has had the audacity to accuse a respectable, and, I dare to say, respected man, of having been the accomplice in such infamy?"

"I," said Rodin coldly.

"You!" cried Dr. Baleinier, falling back two steps, as if thunderstruck.

"Yes, I accuse you," repeated Rodin, in a clear, sharp voice.

"Yes, it was this gentleman who came to me this morning, with ample proofs, to demand my interference in favor of Mademoiselle de Cardoville," said the magistrate, drawing back a little, to give Adrienne the opportunity of seeing her defender.

Throughout this scene, Rodin's name had not hitherto been mentioned. Mademoiselle de Cardoville had often heard speak of the Abbé d'Aigrigny's secretary in no very favorable terms; but, never having seen him, she did not know that her liberator was this very Jesuit. She therefore looked toward him with a glance in which were mingled curiosity, interest, surprise, and gratitude.

Rodin's cadaverous countenance, his repulsive ugliness, his sordid dress, would a few days before have occasioned Adrienne a perhaps

invincible feeling of disgust. But the young lady, remembering how the seamstress, poor, feeble, deformed, and dressed almost in rags, was endowed, notwithstanding her wretched exterior, with one of the noblest and most admirable hearts, recalled this recollection in favor of the Jesuit. She forgot that he was ugly and sordid, only to remember that he was old, that he seemed poor, and that he had come to her assistance. Dr. Baleinier, notwithstanding his craft, notwithstanding his audacious hypocrisy, in spite even of his presence of mind, could not conceal how much he was disturbed by Rodin's denunciation. His head became troubled as he remembered how, on the first day of Adrienne's confinement in this house, the implacable appeal of Rodin, through the hole in the door, had prevented him from yielding to emotions of pity, inspired by the despair of this unfortunate young girl, driven almost to doubt of her own reason. And yet it was this very Rodin, so cruel, so inexorable, the devoted agent of Father d'Aigrigny, who denounced him and brought a magistrate to set Adrienne at liberty — when, only the day before, Father d'Aigrigny had ordered an increase of severity toward her!

The lay Jesuit felt persuaded that Rodin was betraying Father d'Aigrigny in the most shameful manner, and that Mademoiselle de Cardoville's friends had bribed and bought over this scoundrelly secretary. Exasperated by what he considered a monstrous piece of treachery, the doctor exclaimed, in a voice broken with rage: "And it is you, sir, that have the impudence to accuse me—you, who only a few days ago —"

Then, reflecting that the retort upon Rodin would be self-accusation, he appeared to give way to an excess of emotion, and resumed with bitterness: "Ah, sir, you are the last person that I should have thought capable of this odious denunciation. It is shameful!"

"And who had a better right than I to denounce this infamy?" answered Rodin, in a rude, overbearing tone. "Was I not in a position to learn—unfortunately too late—the nature of the conspiracy of which Mademoiselle de Cardoville and others have been the victims? Then, what was my duty as an honest man? Why, to inform the magistrate, to prove what I set forth, and to accompany him hither. That is what I have done."

"So, sir," said the doctor, addressing the magistrate, "it is not only myself that this man accuses, but he dares also —"

"I accuse the Abbé d'Aigrigny," resumed Rodin, in a still louder and more imperative tone, interrupting the doctor, "I accuse the Princess de Saint-Dizier, I accuse you, sir, of having, from a vile motive of self-interest, confined Mademoiselle de Cardoville in this house and the two daughters of Marshal Simon in the neighboring convent. Is that clear?"

"Alas! it is only too true," said Adrienne hastily "I have seen those poor children all in tears making signs of distress to me."

The accusation of Rodin with regard to the orphans was a new and



fearful blow for Dr Baleinier. He felt perfectly convinced that the traitor had passed clear over to the enemy's camp. Wishing, therefore, to put an end to this embarrassing scene, he tried to put a good face on the matter, in spite of his emotion, and said to the magistrate:

"I might confine myself, sir, to silence, disdaining to answer such accusations till a judicial decision had given them some kind of authority. But, strong in a good conscience, I address myself to Mademoiselle de Cardoville, and I beg her to say if this very morning I did not inform her that her health would soon be sufficiently restored to allow her to leave this house. I conjure her, in the name of her well-known love of truth, to state if such was not my language when I was alone with her —"

"Come, sir!" said Rodin, interrupting Baleinier with an insolent air, "suppose that, from pure generosity, this dear young lady were to admit as much — what will it prove in your favor? Why, nothing at all."

"What, sir," cried the doctor, "do you presume —"

"I presume to unmask you without asking your leave. What have you just told us? Why, that being alone with Mademoiselle de Cardoville, you talked to her as if she were really mad. How very conclusive!"

"But, sir —" cried the doctor.

"But, sir," resumed Rodin, without allowing him to continue, "it is evident that, foreseeing the possibility of what has occurred to-day, and to provide yourself with a hole to creep out at, you have pretended to believe your own execrable falsehood, in presence of this poor young lady, that you might afterward call in aid the evidence of your own assumed conviction. Come, sir! such stories will not go down with people of common sense or common humanity"

"Come, now, sir!" exclaimed Baleinier angrily.

"Well, sir," resumed Rodin, in a still louder voice, which completely drowned that of the doctor; "is it true, or is it not, that you have recourse to the mean evasion of ascribing this odious imprisonment to a scientific error? I affirm that you do so, and that you think yourself safe, because you can now say: 'Thanks to my care, the young lady has recovered her reason. What more would you have?'"

"Yes, I do say that, sir, and I maintain it."

"You maintain a falsehood; for it is proven that the lady never lost her reason for a moment."

"But I, sir, maintain that she did lose it."

"And I, sir, will prove the contrary," said Rodin.

"You? How will you do that?" cried the doctor.

"That I shall take care not to tell you at present, as you may well suppose," answered Rodin, with an ironical smile, adding, with indignation: "But, really, sir, you ought to die for shame, to dare to raise such a question in presence of the lady. You should at least have spared her this discussion."

"Sir!"

"Oh, fie, sir! I say fie! It is odious to maintain this argument before her—odious if you speak truth, doubly odious if you lie," said Rodin, with disgust.

"This violence is inconceivable!" cried the Jesuit of the short robe, exasperated; "and I think the magistrate shows great partiality in allowing such gross calumnies to be heaped upon me!"

"Sir!" answered M. de Gernande severely, "I am entitled not only to hear, but to provoke any contradictory discussion that may enlighten me in the execution of my duty; it results from all this that, even in your opinion, sir, Mademoiselle de Cardoville's health is sufficiently good to allow her to return home immediately"

"At least, I do not see any very serious inconvenience likely to arise from it, sir," said the doctor: "only I maintain that the cure is not so complete as it might have been, and, on this subject, I decline all responsibility for the future."

"You can do so safely," said Rodin; "it is not likely that the young lady will ever again have recourse to your honest assistance."

"It is useless, therefore, to employ my official authority to demand the immediate liberation of Mademoiselle de Cardoville," said the magistrate.

"She is free," said Baleinier, "perfectly free."

"As for the question whether you have imprisoned her on the plea of a supposititious madness, the law will inquire into it, sir, and you will be heard."

"I am quite easy, sir," answered M. Baleinier, trying to look so; "my conscience reproaches me with nothing."

"I hope it may turn out well, sir," said M. de Gernande. "However bad appearances may be, more especially when persons of your station in society are concerned, we should always wish to be convinced of their innocence." Then, turning to Adrienne, he added: "I understand, mademoiselle, how painful this scene must be to all your feelings of delicacy and generosity; hereafter it will depend upon yourself either to proceed for damages against M. Baleinier or to let the law take its course. One word more. The bold and upright man"—here the magistrate pointed to Rodin—"who has taken up your cause in so frank and disinterested a manner expressed a belief that you would perhaps take charge for the present of Marshal Simon's daughters, whose liberation I am about to demand from the convent where they also are confined by stratagem."

"The fact is, sir," replied Adrienne, "that as soon as I learned the arrival of Marshal Simon's daughters in Paris, my intention was to offer them apartments in my house. These young ladies are my near relations. It is at once a duty and a pleasure for me to treat them as sis-

ters. I shall therefore be doubly grateful to you, sir, if you will trust them to my care."

"I think that I cannot serve them better," answered M. de Gernande. Then, addressing Baleinier, he added, "Will you consent, sir, to my bringing these two ladies hither? I will go and fetch them while Mademoiselle de Cardoville prepares for her departure. They will then be able to leave this house with their relation."

"I entreat the lady to make use of this house as her own until she leaves it," replied M. Baleinier. "My carriage shall be at her orders to take her home."

"Mademoiselle," said the magistrate, approaching Adrienne, "without prejudging the question which must soon be decided by a court of law, I may at least regret that I was not called in sooner. Your situation must have been a very cruel one."

"There will at least remain to me, sir, from this mournful time," said Adrienne, with graceful dignity, "one precious and touching remembrance—that of the interest which you have shown me. I hope that you will one day permit me to thank you at my own home, not for the justice you have done me, but for the benevolent and paternal manner in which you have done it. And moreover, sir," added Mademoiselle de Cardoville, with a sweet smile, "I should like to prove to you that what they call my cure is complete."

M. de Gernande bowed respectfully in reply. During the short dialogue of the magistrate with Adrienne, their backs were both turned to Baleinier and Rodin. The latter, profiting by this moment's opportunity, hastily slipped into the doctor's hand a note just written with a pencil in the bottom of his hat.

Baleinier looked at Rodin in stupefied amazement. But the latter made a peculiar sign by raising his thumb to his forehead and drawing it twice across his brow. Then he remained impassible.

This had passed so rapidly that when M. de Gernande turned round, Rodin was at a distance of several steps from Dr. Baleinier and looking at Mademoiselle de Cardoville with respectful interest.

"Permit me to accompany you, sir," said the doctor, preceding the magistrate, whom Mademoiselle de Cardoville saluted with much affability. Then both went out and Rodin remained alone with the young lady.

After conducting M. de Gernande to the outer door of the house, M. Baleinier made haste to read the pencil-note written by Rodin; it ran as follows: "The magistrate is going to the convent by way of the street. Run round by the garden and tell the superior to obey the

order I have given with regard to the two young girls. It is of the utmost importance."

The peculiar sign which Rodin had made and the tenor of this note proved to Dr. Baleinier, who was passing from surprise to amazement, that the secretary, far from betraying the reverend father, was still acting for the *Greater Glory of God*.

However, while he obeyed the orders, M. Baleinier sought in vain to penetrate the motives of Rodin's inexplicable conduct, who had himself informed the authorities of an affair that was to have been hushed up, and that might have the most disastrous consequences for Father d'Aigrigny, Madame de Saint-Dizier, and Baleinier himself.

But let us return to Rodin, left alone with Mademoiselle de Cardoville.

CHAPTER VII

FATHER D'AIGRIGNY'S SECRETARY

HARDLY had the magistrate and Dr. Baleinier disappeared, than Mademoiselle de Cardoville, whose countenance was beaming with joy, exclaimed, as she looked at Rodin with a mixture of respect and gratitude: "At length, thanks to you, sir, I am free—free! Oh, I had never before felt how much happiness, expansion, delight, there is in that adorable word—liberty!"

Her bosom rose and fell, her rosy nostrils dilated, her vermilion lips were half open, as if she again inhaled with rapture pure and vivifying air.

"I have been only a few days in this horrible place," she resumed, "but I have suffered enough from my captivity to make me resolve never to let a year pass without restoring to liberty some poor prisoners for debt. This vow no doubt appears to belong a little to the Middle Ages," added she, with a smile; "but I would fain borrow from that noble epoch something more than its old windows and furniture. So, doubly thanks, sir! for I take you as a partner in that project of deliverance, which has just, you see, unfolded itself in the midst of the happiness I owe to you, and by which you seem so much affected. Oh, let my joy speak my gratitude and pay you for your generous aid!" exclaimed the young girl with enthusiasm.

Mademoiselle de Cardoville had truly remarked a complete transfiguration in the countenance of Rodin. This man, lately so harsh, severe, inflexible with regard to Dr. Baleinier, appeared now under the influence of the mildest and most tender sentiments. His little, half-veiled eyes were fixed upon Adrienne with an expression of ineffable interest. Then, as if he wished to tear himself from these impressions, he said, speaking to himself: "Come, come! no weakness. Time is too precious; my mission is not fulfilled. My dear young lady," added he, addressing himself to Adrienne, "believe what I say—we will talk

hereafter of gratitude—but we have now to talk of the present, so important for you and your family. Do you know what is taking place?”

Adrienne looked at the Jesuit with surprise, and said: “What is taking place, sir?”

“Do you know the real motive of your imprisonment in this house? Do you know what influenced the Princess de Saint-Dizier and Abbé d'Aigrigny?”

At the sound of those detested names, Mademoiselle de Cardoville's face, now so full of happiness, became suddenly sad, and she answered with bitterness:

“It is hatred, sir, that no doubt animated Madame de Saint-Dizier against me.”

“Yes, hatred; and, moreover, the desire to rob you with impunity of an immense fortune.”

“Me, sir! how?”

“You must be ignorant, my dear young lady, of the interest you had to be in the Rue Saint François on the 13th of February for an inheritance?”

“I was ignorant, sir, of the date and details; but I knew by some family papers, and thanks to an extraordinary circumstance, that one of our ancestors ——”

“Had left an enormous sum to be divided between his descendants; is it not so?”

“Yes, sir.”

“But what, unfortunately, you did not know, my dear young lady, was that the heirs were all bound to be present at a certain hour on the 13th February. This day and hour once past, the absent would forfeit their claim. Do you now understand why you have been imprisoned here, my dear young lady?”

“Yes, yes; I understand it,” cried Mademoiselle de Cardoville; “cupidity was added to the hatred which my aunt felt for me. All is explained. Marshal Simon's daughters, having the same right as I had, have, like me, been imprisoned.”

“And yet,” cried Rodin, “you and they were not the only victims.”

“Who, then, are the others, sir?”

“A young East Indian.”

“Prince Djalma?” said Adrienne hastily

“For the same reason he has been nearly poisoned with a narcotic.”

“Great God!” cried the young girl, clasping her hands in horror. “It is fearful. That young prince, who was said to have so noble and generous a character! But I had sent to the Château of Cardoville ——”

"A confidential person, to fetch the prince to Paris—I know it, my dear young lady; but, by means of a trick, your friend was got out of the way, and the young Oriental delivered to his enemies."

"And where is he now?"

"I have only vague information on the subject. I know that he is in Paris, and do not despair of finding him. I shall pursue my researches with an almost paternal ardor, for we cannot too much love the rare qualities of that poor king's son. What a heart, my dear young lady! what a heart! Oh, it is a heart of gold, pure and bright as the gold of his country!"

"We must find the prince, sir," said Adrienne, with emotion; "let me entreat you to neglect nothing for that end. He is my relation—alone here—without support, without assistance."

"Certainly," replied Rodin, with commiseration. "Poor boy!—for he is almost a boy, eighteen or nineteen years of age, thrown into the heart of Paris, of this hell. With his fresh, ardent, half-savage passions, with his simplicity and confidence, to what perils may he not be exposed?"

"Well, we must first find him, sir," said Adrienne, hastily; "and then we will save him from these dangers. Before I was confined here, I learned his arrival in France, and sent a confidential person to offer him the services of an unknown friend. I now see that this mad idea, with which I have been so much reproached, was a very sensible one. I am more convinced of it than ever. The prince belongs to my family, and I owe him a generous hospitality. I had destined for him the lodge I occupied at my aunt's."

"And you, my dear young lady?"

"To-day I shall remove to a house which I had prepared some time ago with the determination of quitting Madame de Saint-Dizier and living alone as I pleased. Then, sir, as you seem bent upon being the good genius of our family, be as generous with regard to Prince Djalma as you have been to me and Marshal Simon's daughters. I entreat you to discover the hiding-place of this poor king's son, as you call him; keep my secret for me, and conduct him to the house offered by the unknown friend. Let him not disquiet himself about anything; all his wants shall be provided for; he shall live like a prince."

"Yes; he will indeed live like a prince, thanks to your royal munificence. But never was such kind interest better deserved. It is enough to see, as I have seen, his fine, melancholy countenance ——"

"You have seen him then, sir?" said Adrienne, interrupting Rodin.

"Yes, my dear young lady; I was with him for about two hours. It was quite enough to judge of him. His charming features are the mirror of his soul."

“And where did you see him, sir?”

“At your old Château de Cardoville, my dear young lady, near which he had been shipwrecked in a storm, and whither I had gone to ——”



Rodin hesitated for a moment, and then, as if yielding to the frankness of his disposition, added: “Whither I had gone to commit a bad action — a shameful, miserable action, I must confess!”

"You, sir?—at the Château de Cardoville—to commit a bad action?" cried Adrienne, much surprised.

"Alas! yes, my dear young lady," answered Rodin, with simplicity "In one word, I had orders from Abbé d'Aigrigny to place your former bailiff in the alternative either of losing his situation or lending himself to a mean action—something, in fact, that resembled spying and calumny; but the honest, worthy man refused."

"Why, who are you, sir?" said Mademoiselle de Cardoville, more and more astonished.

"I am Rodin, lately secretary of the Abbé d'Aigrigny—a person of very little importance, as you see."

It is impossible to describe the accent, at once humble and ingenuous, of the Jesuit as he pronounced these words, which he accompanied with a respectful bow.

On this revelation, Mademoiselle de Cardoville drew back abruptly. We have said that Adrienne had sometimes heard talk of Rodin, the humble secretary of the Abbé d'Aigrigny, as a sort of obedient and passive machine. That was not all; the bailiff of Cardoville, writing to Adrienne on the subject of Prince Djalma, had complained of the perfidious and dishonest propositions of Rodin. She felt, therefore, a vague suspicion when she heard that her liberator was the man who had played so odious a part. Yet this unfavorable feeling was balanced by the sense of what she owed to Rodin, and by his frank denunciation of Abbé d'Aigrigny before the magistrate. And then the Jesuit, by his own confession, had anticipated, as it were, the reproaches that might have been addressed to him.

Still, it was with a kind of cold reserve that Mademoiselle de Cardoville resumed this dialogue, which she had commenced with as much frankness as warmth and sympathy.

Rodin perceived the impression he had made. He expected it. He was not the least disconcerted when Mademoiselle de Cardoville said to him, as she fixed upon him a piercing glance: "Ah! you are M. Rodin—secretary to the Abbé d'Aigrigny"

"Say ex-secretary, if you please, my dear young lady," answered the Jesuit; "for you see clearly that I can never again enter the house of the Abbé d'Aigrigny. I have made of him an implacable enemy, and I am now without employment; but no matter—nay, so much the better, since, at this price, the wicked are unmasked and honest people rescued."

These words, spoken with much simplicity and dignity, revived a feeling of pity in Adrienne's heart. She thought within herself that, after all, the poor old man spoke the truth. Abbé d'Aigrigny's hate,

after this exposure, would be inexorable, and Rodin had braved it for the sake of a generous action.

Still Mademoiselle de Cardoville answered coldly: "Since you knew, sir, that the propositions you were charged to make to the bailiff of Cardoville were shameful and perfidious, how could you undertake the mission?"

"How!" replied Rodin, with a sort of painful impatience; "why, because I was completely under Abbé d'Aigrigny's charm, one of the most prodigiously clever men I have ever known, and, as I only discovered the day before yesterday, one of the most prodigiously dangerous men there is in the world. He had conquered my scruples by persuading me that the end justifies the means. I must confess that the end he seemed to propose to himself was great and beautiful; but the day before yesterday I was cruelly undeceived. I was awakened, as it were, by a thunder-peal. Oh, my dear young lady!" added Rodin, with a sort of embarrassment and confusion, "let us talk no more of my fatal journey to Cardoville. Though I was only an ignorant and blind instrument, I feel as ashamed and grieved at it as if I had acted for myself. It weighs upon me, it oppresses me. I entreat you, let us speak rather of yourself and of what interests you, for the soul expands with generous thoughts, even as the breast is dilated in pure and healthful air."

Rodin had confessed his fault so spontaneously, he explained it so naturally, he appeared to regret it so sincerely, that Adrienne, whose suspicions had no other grounds, felt her distrust a good deal diminished.

"So," she resumed, still looking attentively at Rodin, "it was at Cardoville that you saw Prince Djalma?"

"Yes, mademoiselle; and my affection for him dates from that interview. Therefore, I will accomplish my task. Be satisfied, my dear young lady; like you, like Marshal Simon's daughters, the prince shall avoid being the victim of this detestable plot, which unhappily does not stop there."

"And who besides, then, is threatened?"

"M. Hardy, a man full of honor and probity, who is also your relation and interested in this inheritance, but kept away from Paris by infamous treachery. And another heir, an unfortunate artisan, who, falling into a trap cleverly baited, has been thrown into a prison for debt."

"But, sir," said Adrienne suddenly, "for whose advantage was this abominable plot, which really alarms me, first devised?"

"For the advantage of Abbé d'Aigrigny," answered Rodin.

"How, and by what right? Was he also an heir?"

"It would take too long to explain it to you, my dear young lady.

You will know all one day Only, be convinced that your family has no more bitter enemy than Abbé d'Aigrigny."

"Sir," said Adrienne, giving way to one last suspicion, "I will speak frankly to you. How can I have deserved the interest that you seem to take in me, and that you even extend to all the members of my family?"

"My dear young lady," answered Rodin, with a smile, "were I to tell you the cause, you would only laugh at or misapprehend me."

"Speak, I beg of you, sir. Do not mistrust me or yourself."

"Well, then, I became interested in you, devoted to you, because your heart is generous, your mind lofty, your character independent and proud. Once attached to you, those of your race, who are indeed themselves worthy of interest, were no longer indifferent to me. To serve them was to serve you also."

"But, sir, admitting that you suppose me worthy of the too flattering praises you bestow upon me, how could you judge of my heart, my mind, my character?"

"I will tell you, my dear young lady; but first I must make another confession that fills me with shame. If you were not even so wonderfully endowed, what you have suffered in this house should suffice to command the interest of every honest man — don't you think so?"

"I do think it should, sir"

"I might thus explain the interest I feel in you. But no — I confess it — that would not have sufficed with me. Had you been only Made-moiselle de Cardoville, a rich, noble, beautiful young lady, I should doubtless have pitied your misfortune; but I should have said to myself: 'This poor young lady is certainly much to be pitied; but what can I, poor man, do in the case? My only resource is my post of secretary to the Abbé d'Aigrigny, and he would be the first that must be attacked. He is all-powerful and I am nothing. To engage in a struggle with him would be to ruin myself, without the hope of saving this unfortunate person.' But when I learnt what you were, my dear young lady, I revolted, in spite of my inferiority 'No,' I said, 'a thousand times no! So fine an intellect, so great a heart, shall not be the victims of an abominable plot. I may perish in the struggle, but I will at least make the attempt.'"

No words can paint the mixture of delicacy, energy, and sensibility with which Rodin uttered these sentiments. As it often happens with people singularly repulsive and ill-favored, if they can once bring you to forget their ugliness, their very deformity becomes a source of interest and commiseration, and you say to yourself, "What a pity that such a mind, such a soul, should inhabit so poor a body!" — and you are touched and softened by the contrast.

It was thus that Mademoiselle de Cardoville began to look upon Rodin. He had shown himself as simple and affectionate toward her as he had been brutal and insolent to Dr. Baleinier. One thing only excited the lively curiosity of Mademoiselle de Cardoville—she wished to know how Rodin had conceived the devotion and admiration which she seemed to inspire.

“Forgive my indiscreet and obstinate curiosity, sir, but I wish to know ——”

“How you were morally revealed to me—is it not so? Oh, my dear young lady! nothing is more simple. I will explain it to you in two words. The Abbé d’Aigrigny saw in me nothing but a writing-machine, an obtuse, mute, blind instrument ——”

“I thought M. d’Aigrigny had more penetration.”

“And you are right, my dear young lady; he is a man of unparalleled sagacity; but I deceived him by affecting more than simplicity. Do not, therefore, think me false. No; I am proud in my manner—and my pride consists in never appearing above my position, however subaltern it may be! Do you know why? It is that, however haughty may be my superiors, I can say to myself, ‘They do not know my value. It is the inferiority of my condition, not me, that they humiliate.’ By this I gain doubly—my self-love is spared, and I hate no one.”

“Yes, I understand that sort of pride,” said Adrienne, more and more struck with Rodin’s original turn of mind.

“But let us return to what concerns you, my dear young lady. On the eve of the 13th of February the Abbé d’Aigrigny delivered to me a paper in shorthand, and said to me, ‘Transcribe this examination; you may add that it is to support the decision of a family council, which has declared, in accordance with the report of Dr. Baleinier, the state of mind of Mademoiselle de Cardoville to be sufficiently alarming to render it necessary to confine her in a lunatic asylum.’”

“Yes,” said Adrienne, with bitterness; “it related to a long interview which I had with the Princess de Saint-Dizier, my aunt, and which was taken down without my knowledge.”

“Behold me, then, poring over my shorthand report, and beginning to transcribe it. At the end of the first ten lines, I was struck with stupor. I knew not if I were awake or dreaming. ‘What! mad? They must be themselves insane who dare assert so monstrous a proposition!’ More and more interested, I continued my reading; I finished it. Oh! then, what shall I say? What I felt, my dear young lady, it is impossible to express. It was sympathy, delight, enthusiasm!”

“Sir,” said Adrienne.

“Yes, my dear young lady, enthusiasm! Let not the words shock your

modesty. Know that these ideas, so new, so independent, so courageous, which you expressed to your aunt with so much brilliancy, are, without your being aware of it, common to you and another person, for whom you will one day feel the most tender and religious respect."

"Of whom do you speak, sir?" cried Mademoiselle de Cardoville, more and more interested.

After a moment's apparent hesitation, Rodin resumed:

"No, no — it is useless now to inform you of it. All I can tell you, my dear young lady, is that, when I had finished my reading, I ran to Abbé d'Aigrigny's, to convince him of the error into which he had fallen with regard to you. It was impossible then to find him; but yesterday morning I told him plainly what I thought. He only appeared surprised to find that I could think at all. He received my communications with contemptuous silence. I thought him deceived; I continued my remonstrances, but quite in vain. He ordered me to follow him to the house where the testament of your ancestor was to be opened. I was so blind with regard to the Abbé d'Aigrigny that it required the successive arrivals of the soldier, of his son, and of Marshal Simon's father to open my eyes thoroughly. Their indignation unveiled to me the extent of a conspiracy plotted long ago and carried on with terrible ability. Then I understood why you were confined here as a lunatic; why the daughters of Marshal Simon were imprisoned in a convent. Then a thousand recollections returned to my mind: fragments of letters and statements, which had been given me to copy or decipher and of which I had never been able to find the explanation, put me on the track of this odious machination. To express then and there the sudden horror I felt at these crimes would have been to ruin all. I did not make this mistake. I opposed cunning to cunning; I appeared even more eager than Abbé d'Aigrigny. Had this immense inheritance been destined for me alone, I could not have shown myself more grasping and merciless. Thanks to this stratagem, Abbé d'Aigrigny had no suspicion. A providential accident having rescued the inheritance from his hands, he left the house in a state of profound consternation. For my part, I felt indescribable joy; for I had now the means of saving and avenging you, my dear young lady. As usual, I went yesterday evening to my place of business. During the absence of the abbé, it was easy for me to peruse the correspondence relative to the inheritance. In this way I was able to unite all the threads of this immense plot. Oh! then, my dear young lady, I remained struck with horror in presence of the discoveries that I made, and that I never should have made under any other circumstances."

"What discoveries, sir?"

“There are some secrets which are terrible to those who possess them. Do not ask me to explain, my dear young lady; but, in this examination, the league formed against you and your relations, from motives of insatiable cupidity, appeared to me in all its dark audacity. Thereupon the lively and deep interest which I already felt for you, my dear young lady, was augmented greatly, and extended itself to the other innocent victims of this infernal conspiracy. In spite of my weakness, I determined to risk all to unmask the Abbé d'Aigrigny. I collected the necessary proofs to give my declaration before the magistrate the needful authority; and, this morning, I left the abbé's house without revealing to him my projects. He might have employed some violent method to detain me; yet it would have been cowardly to attack him without warning. Once out of his house, I wrote to him that I had in my hands proofs enough of his crimes to attack him openly in the face of day. I would accuse and he must defend himself. I went directly to a magistrate, and you know the rest.”

At this juncture the door opened, and one of the nurses appeared and said to Rodin: “Sir, the messenger that you and the magistrate sent to the Rue Brise-Miche has just come back.”

“Has he left the letter?”

“Yes, sir; and it was taken upstairs directly.”

“Very well. Leave us!” The nurse went out.

CHAPTER VIII

SYMPATHY

IF it had been possible for Mademoiselle de Cardoville to harbor any suspicion of the sincerity of Rodin's devotion, it must have given way before this reasoning, unfortunately so simple and undeniable. How could she suppose the faintest complicity between the Abbé d'Aigrigny and his secretary, when it was the latter who completely unveiled the machinations of his master and exposed them to the tribunals? when in this, Rodin went even farther than Mademoiselle de Cardoville would herself have gone? Of what secret design could she suspect the Jesuit? At worst, of a desire to earn by his services the profitable patronage of the young lady. And then, had he not just now protested against this supposition, by declaring his devotion, not to Mademoiselle de Cardoville, not to the fair, rich, noble lady, but to the high-souled and generous girl? Finally, as Rodin had said himself, could any but a miserable wretch fail to be interested in Adrienne's fate?

A strange mixture of curiosity, surprise, and interest was joined with Mademoiselle de Cardoville's feelings of gratitude toward Rodin. Yet, as she recognized the superior mind under that humble exterior, she was suddenly struck with a grave suspicion. "Sir," said she to Rodin, "I always confess to the persons I esteem the doubts they may have inspired, so that they may justify themselves, and excuse me if I am wrong."

Rodin looked at Mademoiselle de Cardoville with surprise, as if mentally calculating the suspicions that she might entertain, and replied, after a moment's silence: "You are perhaps thinking of my journey to Cardoville, of my base proposals to your good and worthy bailiff? Oh! if you ——"

"No, no, sir," said Adrienne, interrupting him; "you made that confession spontaneously, and I quite understand that, blinded with regard to M. d'Aigrigny, you passively executed instructions repug-



M. HARDY

nant to your delicacy. But how comes it that, with your incontestable merits, you have so long occupied so mean a position in his service?"

"It is true," said Rodin, with a smile; "that must impress you unfavorably, my dear young lady; for a man of any capacity who remains long in an inferior condition has evidently some radical vice, some bad or base passion ——"

"It is generally true, sir."

"And personally true, with regard to myself."

"What, sir! do you make this avowal?"

"Alas! I confess that I have a bad passion, to which, for forty years, I have sacrificed all chances of attaining to a better position."

"And this passion, sir?"

"Since I must make the unpleasant avowal, this passion is indolence — yes, indolence — the horror of all activity of mind, of all moral responsibility, of taking the lead in anything. With the twelve hundred francs that Abbé d'Aigrigny gave me, I was the happiest man in the world; I trusted in the nobleness of his views; his thoughts became mine, his wishes mine. My work once finished, I returned to my poor little chamber, I lighted my fire, I dined on vegetables; then, taking up some book of philosophy, little known, and dreaming over it, I gave free course to my imagination, which, restrained all the day long, carried me through numberless theories to a delicious Utopia. Then, from the eminences of my intelligence, lifted up, Lord knows whither, by the audacity of my thoughts, I seemed to look down upon my master and upon the great men of the earth. This fever lasted for three or four hours, after which I had a good sleep; and, the next morning, I went lightly to my work, secure of my daily bread, without cares for the future, living content with little, waiting with impatience for the delights of my solitary evening, and saying to myself as I went on writing like a stupid machine: 'And yet — and yet — if I chose! ——'"

"Doubtless, you could, like others, surer than others, have reached a higher position," said Adrienne, greatly struck with Rodin's practical philosophy

"Yes, I think I could have done so; but for what purpose? — You see, my dear young lady, what often renders people of some merit puzzles to the vulgar is that they are frequently content to say: 'If I chose!'"

"But, sir, without attaching much importance to the luxuries of life, there is a certain degree of comfort, which age renders almost indispensable, and which you seem to have utterly renounced."

"Undeceive yourself, if you please, my dear young lady," said Rodin, with a playful smile. "I am a true Sybarite; I require absolutely

warm clothes, a good stove, a soft mattress, a good piece of bread, a fresh radish flavored with good cheap salt, and some good clear water; and, notwithstanding this complication of wants, my twelve hundred francs have always more than sufficed, for I have been able to make some little savings."

"But now that you are without employment, how will you manage to live, sir?" said Adrienne, more and more interested by the singularities of this man, and wishing to put his disinterestedness to the proof.

"I have laid by a little, which will serve me till I have unraveled the last thread of Father d'Aigrigny's dark designs. I owe myself this reparation for having been his dupe; three or four days, I hope, will complete the work. After that I have the certainty of meeting with a situation in my native province under a collector of taxes: some time ago the offer was made me by a friend; but then I would not leave Father d'Aigrigny, notwithstanding the advantages proposed. Fancy, my dear young lady — eight hundred francs, with board and lodging! As I am a little of the roughest, I should have preferred lodging apart; but, as they give me so much, I must submit to this little inconvenience."

Nothing could exceed Rodin's ingenuity in making these little household confidences, so abominably false, to Mademoiselle de Cardoville, who felt her last suspicions give way.

"What, sir?" said she to the Jesuit, with interest; "in three or four days you mean to quit Paris?"

"I hope to do so, my dear young lady; and that," added he, in a mysterious tone, "and that for many reasons. But what would be very precious to me," he resumed, in a serious voice, as he looked at Adrienne with emotion, "would be to carry with me the conviction that you did me the justice to believe that, on merely reading your interview with the Princess de Saint-Dizier, I recognized at once qualities quite unexampled in our day, in a young person of your age and condition."

"Ah, sir!" said Adrienne, with a smile, "do not think yourself obliged to return so soon the sincere praises that I bestowed on your superiority of mind. I should be better pleased with ingratitude."

"Oh, no! I do not flatter you, my dear young lady. Why should I? We may probably never meet again. I do not flatter you; I understand you — that's all; and what will seem strange to you is that your appearance completes the idea which I had already formed of you, my dear young lady, in reading your interview with your aunt; and some parts of your character, hitherto obscure to me, are now fully displayed."

"Really, sir, you astonish me more and more."

"I can't help it! I merely describe my impressions. I can now explain perfectly, for example, your passionate love of the beautiful,

your eager worship of the refinements of the senses, your ardent aspirations for a better state of things, your courageous contempt of many degrading and servile customs to which woman is condemned; yes, now I understand the noble pride with which you contemplate the mob of vain, self-sufficient, ridiculous men, who look upon woman as a creature destined for their service, according to the laws made after their own not very handsome image. In the eyes of these hedge-tyrants, woman, a kind of inferior being, to whom a council of cardinals deigned to grant a soul by a majority of two voices, ought to think herself supremely happy in being the servant of these petty pashas, old at thirty, worn-out, used-up, weary with excesses, wishing only for repose, and seeking, as they say, to make an end of it, which they set about by marrying some poor girl who is, on her side, desirous to make a beginning."

Mademoiselle de Cardoville would certainly have smiled at these satirical remarks, if she had not been greatly struck by hearing Rodin express in such appropriate terms her own ideas, though it was the first time in her life that she saw this dangerous man.

Adrienne forgot, or rather, she was not aware, that she had to deal with a Jesuit of rare intelligence, uniting the information and the mysterious resources of the police spy with the profound sagacity of the confessor; one of those diabolic priests who, by the help of a few hints, avowals, letters, reconstruct a character as Cuvier could reconstruct a body from zoölogical fragments.

Far from interrupting Rodin, Adrienne listened to him with growing curiosity. Sure of the effect he produced, he continued, in a tone of indignation: "And your aunt and the Abbé d'Aigrigny treated you as mad because you revolted against the yoke of such tyrants! because, hating the shameful vices of slavery, you chose to be independent with the suitable qualities of independence, free with the proud virtues of liberty!"

"But, sir," said Adrienne, more and more surprised, "how can my thoughts be so familiar to you?"

"First, I know you perfectly, thanks to your interview with the Princess de Saint-Dizier; and next, if it should happen that we both pursue the same end, though by different means," resumed Rodin artfully, as he looked at Mademoiselle de Cardoville with an air of intelligence, "why should not our convictions be the same?"

"I do not understand you, sir. Of what end do you speak?"

"The end pursued incessantly by all lofty, generous, independent spirits—some acting like you, my dear young lady, from passion, from instinct, without perhaps explaining to themselves the high mission

they are called on to fulfill. Thus, for example, when you take pleasure in the most refined delights, when you surround yourself with all that charms the senses, do you think that you only yield to the attraction of the beautiful, to the desire of exquisite enjoyments? No! ah, no! for then you would be incomplete, odiously selfish, a dry egotist with a fine taste—nothing more; and at your age it would be hideous, my dear young lady, it would be hideous!”

“And do you really think thus severely of me?” said Adrienne with uneasiness, so much influence had this man irresistibly attained over her.

“Certainly, I should think thus of you, if you loved luxury for luxury’s sake; but, no—quite another sentiment animates you,” resumed the Jesuit. “Let us reason a little. Feeling a passionate desire for all these enjoyments, you know their value and their need more than any one—is it not so?”

“It is so,” replied Adrienne, deeply interested.

“Your gratitude and favor are then necessarily acquired by those who, poor, laborious, and unknown, have procured for you these marvels of luxury which you could not do without?”

“This feeling of gratitude is so strong in me, sir,” replied Adrienne, more and more pleased to find herself so well understood, “that I once had inscribed on a master-piece of goldsmith’s work, instead of the name of the seller, that of the poor unknown artist who designed it, and who has since risen to his true place.”

“There, you see, I was not deceived,” went on Rodin; “the taste for enjoyment renders you grateful to those who procure it for you. And that is not all; here am I, an example, neither better nor worse than my neighbors, but accustomed to privations, which cause me no suffering, so that the privations of others necessarily touch me less nearly than they do you, my dear young lady; for your habits of comfort must needs render you more compassionate toward misfortune. You would yourself suffer too much from poverty not to pity and succor those who are its victims.”

“Really, sir,” said Adrienne, who began to feel herself under the fatal charm of Rodin, “the more I listen to you, the more I am convinced that you would defend a thousand times better than I could those ideas for which I was so harshly reproached by Madame de Saint-Dizier and Abbé d’Aigrigny. Oh! speak, speak, sir! I cannot tell you with what happiness, with what pride I listen.”

Attentive and moved, her eyes fixed on the Jesuit with as much interest as sympathy and curiosity, Adrienne, by a graceful toss of the head that was habitual to her, threw back her long, golden curls, the better to contemplate Rodin, who thus resumed:

"You are astonished, my dear young lady, that you were not understood by your aunt or by Abbé d'Aigrigny! What point of contact had you with these hypocritical, jealous, crafty minds, such as I can judge them to be now? Do you wish a new proof of their hateful blindness? Among what they called your monstrous follies, which was the worst, the most damnable? Why, your resolution to live alone and in your own way, to dispose freely of the present and the future. They declared this to be odious, detestable, immoral. And yet, was this resolution dictated by a mad love of liberty? no! by a disordered aversion to all restraint? no! by the desire of singularity? no! for then I too should have blamed you severely."

"Other reasons have indeed guided me, sir, I assure you," said Adrienne eagerly, for she had become very eager for the esteem with which her character might inspire Rodin.

"Oh! I know it well; your motives could only be excellent ones," replied the Jesuit. "Why then did you take this resolution, so much called in question? Was it to brave established etiquette? no! for you respected them until the hate of Madame de Saint-Dizier forced you to withdraw yourself from her unbearable guardianship. Was it to live alone, to escape the eyes of the world? no! you would be a hundred times more open to observation in this than any other condition. Was it to make a bad use of your liberty? no, ah, no! Those who design evil seek for darkness and solitude; while you place yourself right before the jealous and envious eyes of the vulgar crowd. Why then do you take this determination, so courageous and rare, unexampled in a young person of your age? Shall I tell you, my dear young lady? It is, that you wish to prove, by your example, that a woman of pure heart and honest mind, with a firm character and independence of soul, may nobly and proudly throw off the humiliating guardianship that custom has imposed upon her. Yes, instead of accepting the fate of a revolted slave, a life only destined to hypocrisy or vice, you wish to live freely in presence of all the world, independent, honorable, and respected. You wish to have, like man, the exercise of your own free will, the entire responsibility of all your actions, so as to establish the fact that a woman left completely to herself may equal man in reason, wisdom, uprightness, and surpass him in delicacy and dignity. That is your design, my dear young lady. It is noble and great. Will your example be imitated? I hope it may; but whether it be so or not, your generous attempt, believe me, will place you in a high and worthy position."

Mademoiselle de Cardoville's eyes shone with a proud and gentle brightness, her cheeks were slightly colored, her bosom heaved, she raised her charming head with a movement of involuntary pride;

at length, completely under the charm of that diabolical man, she exclaimed:

"But, sir, who are you that can thus know and analyze my most secret thoughts, and read my soul more clearly than myself, so as to give new life and action to those ideas of independence which have long stirred within me? Who are you that can thus elevate me in my own eyes, for now I am conscious of accomplishing a mission, honorable to myself, and perhaps useful to my sisters immersed in slavery? Once again, sir, who are you?"

"Who am I, madame?" answered Rodin, with a smile of the greatest good-nature; "I have already told you that I am a poor old man who for the last forty years, having served in the daytime as a writing-machine to record the ideas of others, went home every evening to work out ideas of his own—a good kind of a man who, from his garret, watches and even takes some little share in the movement of generous spirits, advancing toward an end that is nearer than is commonly thought. And thus, my dear young lady, as I told you just now, you and I are both tending toward the same objects, though you may do the same without reflection, and merely in obedience to your rare and divine instincts. So continue so to live, fair, free, and happy!—it is your mission—more providential than you may think it. Yes; continue to surround yourself with all the marvels of luxury and art; refine your senses, purify your tastes, by the exquisite choice of your enjoyments; by genius, grace, and purity raise yourself above the stupid and ill-favored mob of men that will instantly surround you when they behold you alone and free; they will consider you an easy prey, destined to please their cupidity, their egotism, their folly. Laugh at them, and mock these idiotic and sordid pretensions. Be the queen of your own world, and make yourself respected as a queen. Love—shine—enjoy; it is your part upon earth. All the flowers with which you are whelmed in profusion will one day bear fruit. You think that you have lived only for pleasure; in reality, you will have lived for the noblest aims that could tempt a great and lofty soul. And so some years hence we may meet again, perhaps,—you, fairer and more followed than ever; I, older and more obscure. But, no matter—a secret voice, I am sure, says to you at this moment that between us two, however different, there exists an invisible bond, a mysterious communion, which nothing hereafter will ever be able to destroy!"

He uttered these final words in a tone of such profound emotion that Adrienne started. Rodin had approached without her perceiving it, and without, as it were, walking at all, for he dragged his steps along the floor, with a sort of serpent motion; and he had spoken with so much warmth and enthusiasm that his pale face had become slightly

tinged, and his repulsive ugliness had almost disappeared before the brilliancy of his small sharp eyes, now wide open and fixed full upon Adrienne. The latter leaned forward, with half-open lips and deep-



drawn breath, nor could she take her eyes from the Jesuit's; he had ceased to speak, and yet she was still listening. The feelings of the fair young lady, in presence of this little old man, dirty, ugly, and poor, were inexplicable. That comparison, so common and yet so true, of the

frightful fascination of the bird by the serpent, might give some idea of the singular impression made upon her.

Rodin's tactics were skillful and sure. Until now, Mademoiselle de Cardoville had never analyzed her tastes or instincts. She had followed them because they were inoffensive and charming. How happy and proud she then was sure to be to hear a man of superior mind not only praise these tendencies, for which she had been heretofore so severely blamed, but congratulate her upon them, as upon something great, noble, and divine.

If Rodin had only addressed himself to Adrienne's self-conceit, he would have failed in his perfidious designs, for she had not the least spark of vanity. But he addressed himself to all that was enthusiastic and generous in her heart; that which he appeared to encourage and admire in her was really worthy of encouragement and admiration. How could she fail to be the dupe of such language, concealing though it did such dark and fatal projects?

Struck with the Jesuit's rare intelligence, feeling her curiosity greatly excited by some mysterious words that he had purposely uttered, hardly explaining to herself the strange influence which this pernicious counselor already exercised over her, and animated by respectful compassion for a man of his age and talents placed in so precarious a position, Adrienne said to him, with all her natural cordiality: "A man of your merit and character, sir, ought not to be at the mercy of the caprice of circumstances. Some of your words have opened a new horizon before me; I feel that, on many points, your counsels may be of the greatest use to me. Moreover, in coming to fetch me from this house, and in devoting yourself to the service of other persons of my family, you have shown me marks of interest which I cannot forget without ingratitude. You have lost a humble but secure situation. Permit me ——"

"Not a word more, my dear young lady," said Rodin, interrupting Mademoiselle de Cardoville, with an air of chagrin. "I feel for you the deepest sympathy; I am honored by having ideas in common with you; I believe firmly that some day you will have to ask advice of the poor old philosopher; and, precisely because of all that, I must and ought to maintain toward you the most complete independence."

"But, sir, it is I that would be the obliged party, if you deigned to accept what I offer."

"Oh, my dear young lady," said Rodin, with a smile; "I know that your generosity would always know how to make gratitude light and easy; but, once more, I cannot accept anything from you. One day, perhaps, you will know why."

"One day?"

"It is impossible for me to tell you more. And then, supposing I were under an obligation to you, how could I tell you all that was good and beautiful in your actions? Hereafter, if you are somewhat indebted to me for my advice, so much the better; I shall be the more ready to blame you, if I find anything to blame."

"In this way, sir, you would forbid me to be grateful to you."

"No, no," said Rodin, with apparent emotion. "Oh, believe me! there will come a solemn moment in which you may repay all, in a manner worthy of yourself and me."

This conversation was here interrupted by the nurse, who said to Adrienne as she entered:

"Madame, there is a little humpbacked work-woman downstairs who wishes to speak to you. As, according to the doctor's new orders, you are to do as you like, I have come to ask if I am to bring her up to you. She is so badly dressed that I did not venture."

"Bring her up, by all means," said Adrienne hastily, for she had recognized Mother Bunch by the nurse's description. "Bring her up directly."

"The doctor has also left word that his carriage is to be at your orders, madame; are the horses to be put to?"

"Yes, in a quarter of an hour," answered Adrienne to the nurse, who went out; then, addressing Rodin, she continued: "I do not think the magistrate can now be long before he returns with Marshal Simon's daughters."

"I think not, my dear young lady; but who is this deformed work-woman?" asked Rodin, with an air of indifference.

"The adopted sister of a gallant fellow who risked all in endeavoring to rescue me from this house. And, sir," said Adrienne, with emotion, "this young work-woman is a rare and excellent creature. Never was a nobler mind, a more generous heart, concealed beneath an exterior less ——"

But, reflecting that Rodin seemed to unite in his own person the same moral and physical contrasts as the sewing-girl, Adrienne stopped short, and then added, with inimitable grace, as she looked at the Jesuit, who was somewhat astonished at the sudden pause: "No; this noble girl is not the only person who proves how loftiness of soul and superiority of mind can make us indifferent to the vain advantages which belong only to the accidents of birth or fortune."

At the moment of Adrienne speaking these last words, Mother Bunch entered the room.

PART XIII

A PROTECTOR

CHAPTER I

SUSPICIONS



ADEMOISELLE DE CARDOVILLE sprang hastily to meet the visitor, and said to her, in a voice of emotion, as she extended her arms toward her: "Come, come; there is no grating to separate us now!"

On this allusion, which reminded her how her poor, laborious hand had been respectfully kissed by the fair and rich patrician, the young work-woman felt a sentiment of gratitude which was at once ineffable and proud. But, as she hesitated to respond to the cordial reception, Adrienne embraced her with touching affection. When Mother Bunch found herself clasped in the fair arms of Mademoiselle de Cardoville, when she felt the fresh and rosy lips of the young lady fraternally pressed to her own pale and sickly cheek, she burst into tears without being able to utter a word. Rodin, retired in a corner of the chamber, looked on this scene with secret uneasiness. Informed of the refusal, so full of dignity, which Mother Bunch had opposed to the perfidious temptations of the superior of St. Mary's Convent, and knowing the deep devotion of this generous creature for Agricola,—a devotion which for some days she had so bravely extended to Mademoiselle de Cardoville,—the Jesuit did not like to see the latter thus laboring to increase that affection. He thought, wisely, that one should

never despise friend or enemy, however small they may appear. Now, devotion to Mademoiselle de Cardoville constituted an enemy in his eyes; and we know, moreover, that Rodin combined in his character rare firmness with a certain degree of superstitious weakness, and he now felt uneasy at the singular impression of fear which Mother Bunch inspired in him. He determined to recollect this presentiment.

Delicate natures sometimes display in the smallest things the most charming instincts of grace and goodness. Thus, when the sewing-girl was shedding abundant and sweet tears of gratitude, Adrienne took a richly embroidered handkerchief and dried the pale and melancholy face.

This action, so simple and spontaneous, spared the workgirl one humiliation; for, alas! humiliation and suffering are the two gulfs along the edge of which misfortune continually passes. Therefore, the least kindness is in general a double benefit to the unfortunate. Perhaps the reader may smile in disdain at the puerile circumstance we mention. But poor Mother Bunch, not venturing to take from her pocket her old ragged handkerchief, would long have remained blinded by her tears if Mademoiselle de Cardoville had not come to her aid.

"Oh! you are so good, so nobly charitable, lady!"

This was all that the seamstress could say, in a tone of deep emotion; for she was still more touched by the attention of the young lady than she would perhaps have been by a service rendered.

"Look there, sir," said Adrienne to Rodin, who drew near hastily. "Yes," added the young patrician proudly, "I have indeed discovered a treasure. Look at her, sir; and love her as I love her, honor as I honor. She has one of those hearts for which we are seeking."

"And which, thank Heaven, we are still able to find, my dear young lady!" said Rodin, as he bowed to the needle-woman.

The latter raised her eyes slowly and looked at the Jesuit. At sight of that cadaverous countenance, which was smiling benignantly upon her, the young girl started. It was strange! she had never seen this man, and yet she felt instantly the same fear and repulsion that he had felt with regard to her. Generally timid and confused, the workgirl could not withdraw her eyes from Rodin's; her heart beat violently, as at the coming of some great danger, and, as the excellent creature feared only for those she loved, she approached Adrienne involuntarily, keeping her eyes fixed on Rodin.

The Jesuit was too good a physiognomist not to perceive the formidable impression he had made, and he felt an increase of his instinctive aversion for the seamstress. Instead of casting down his eyes, he

appeared to examine her with such sustained attention that Mademoiselle de Cardoville was astonished at it.

"I beg your pardon, my dear girl!" said Rodin, as if recalling his recollections, and addressing himself to Mother Bunch, "I beg your pardon—but I think—if I am not deceived—did you not go a few days since to St. Mary's Convent, hard by?"

"Yes, sir"

"No doubt it was you. Where then was my head?" cried Rodin. "It was you; I should have guessed it sooner."

"Of what do you speak, sir?" asked Adrienne.

"Oh! you are right, my dear young lady," said Rodin, pointing to the hunchback. "She has indeed a noble heart, such as we seek. If you knew with what dignity, with what courage this poor girl, who was out of work,—and for her to want work is to want everything,—if you knew, I say, with what dignity she rejected the shameful wages that the superior of the convent was unprincipled enough to offer on condition of her acting as a spy in a family where it was proposed to place her!"

"Oh, that is infamous!" cried Mademoiselle de Cardoville, with disgust. "Such a proposal to this poor girl—to her!"

"Mademoiselle," said Mother Bunch bitterly, "I had no work, I was poor, they did not know me, and they thought they might propose anything to the likes of me."

"And I tell you," said Rodin, "that it was a double baseness on the part of the superior to offer such temptation to misery, and it was doubly noble in you to refuse."

"Sir," said the sewing-girl, with modest embarrassment.

"Oh! I am not to be intimidated," resumed Rodin. "Praise or blame, I speak out roughly what I think. Ask this dear young lady," he added, with a glance at Adrienne. "I tell you plainly that I think as well of you as she does herself."

"Believe me, dear," said Adrienne, "there are some sorts of praise which honor, recompense, and encourage; and M. Rodin's is of the number. I know it—yes, I know it."

"Nay, my dear young lady, you must not ascribe to me all the honor of this judgment."

"How so, sir?"

"Is not this dear girl the adopted sister of Agricola Baudoin, the gallant workman, the energetic and popular poet? Is not the affection of such a man the best of guarantees, and does it not enable us to judge, as it were, by the label?" added Rodin, with a smile.

"You are right, sir," said Adrienne; "for before knowing this dear

girl I began to feel deeply interested in her from the day that her adopted brother spoke to me about her. He expressed himself with so much warmth, so much enthusiasm, that I at once conceived an esteem for the person capable of inspiring so noble an attachment."

These words of Adrienne, joined to another circumstance, had such an effect upon their hearer that her pale face became crimson. The unfortunate hunchback loved Agricola with a love as passionate as it was secret and painful; the most indirect allusion to this fatal sentiment occasioned her the most cruel embarrassment. Now, the moment Mademoiselle de Cardoville spoke of Agricola's attachment for Mother Bunch, the latter had encountered Rodin's observing and penetrating look fixed upon her. Alone with Adrienne, the seamstress would have felt only a momentary confusion on hearing the name of the smith; but unfortunately she fancied that the Jesuit, who already filled her with involuntary fear, had seen into her heart, and read the secrets of that fatal love, of which she was the victim. Thence the deep blushes of the poor girl, and the embarrassment, so painfully visible that Adrienne was struck with it.

A subtle and prompt mind like Rodin's, on perceiving the smallest effect, immediately seeks the cause. Proceeding by comparison, the Jesuit saw on one side a deformed but intelligent young girl, capable of passionate devotion; on the other, a young workman, handsome, bold, frank, and full of talent. "Brought up together, sympathizing with each other on many points, there must be some fraternal affection between them," said he to himself; "but fraternal affection does not blush, and the hunchback blushed and grew troubled beneath my look; does she then *love* Agricola?"

Once on the scent of this discovery, Rodin wished to pursue the investigation. Remarking the surprise and visible uneasiness that Mother Bunch had caused in Adrienne, he said to the latter, with a smile, looking significantly at the needle-woman:

"You see, my dear young lady, how she blushes. The good girl is troubled by what we said of the attachment of this gallant workman."

The needle-woman hung down her head, overcome with confusion.

After the pause of a second, during which Rodin preserved silence so as to give time for his cruel remark to pierce the heart of the victim, the savage resumed:

"Look at the dear girl! how embarrassed she appears!"

Again, after another silence, perceiving that Mother Bunch from crimson had become deadly pale and was trembling in all her limbs, the Jesuit feared he had gone too far, while Adrienne said to her friend, with anxiety: "Why, dear child, are you so agitated?"

"Oh! it is clear enough," resumed Rodin, with an air of perfect simplicity; for, having discovered what he wished to know, he now chose to appear unconscious. "It is quite clear and plain. This good girl



has the modesty of a kind and tender sister for a brother. When you praise him she fancies that she is herself praised."

"And she is as modest as she is excellent," added Adrienne, taking both of the girl's hands, "the least praise, either of her adopted brother

or of herself, troubles her in this way. But it is mere childishness, and I must scold her for it."

Mademoiselle de Cardoville spoke sincerely, for the explanation given by Rodin appeared to her very plausible. Like all other persons who, dreading every moment the discovery of some painful secret, have their courage as easily restored as shaken, Mother Bunch persuaded herself — and she needed to do so, to escape dying of shame — that the last words of Rodin were sincere, and that he had no idea of the love she felt for Agricola. So her agony diminished, and she found words to reply to Mademoiselle de Cardoville.

"Excuse me, mademoiselle," she said timidly, "I am so little accustomed to such kindness as that with which you overwhelm me that I make a sorry return for all your goodness."

"Kindness, my poor girl?" said Adrienne. "I have done nothing for you yet. But, thank Heaven! from this day I shall be able to keep my promise, and reward your devotion to me, your courageous resignation, your sacred love of labor, and the dignity of which you have given so many proofs, under the most cruel privations. In a word, from this day, if you do not object to it, we will part no more."

"Mademoiselle, you are too kind," said Mother Bunch, in a trembling voice; "but I ——"

"Oh! be satisfied," said Adrienne, anticipating her meaning. "If you accept my offer, I shall know how to reconcile with my desire (not a little selfish) of having you near me the independence of your character, your habits of labor, your taste for retirement, and your anxiety to devote yourself to those who deserve commiseration; it is, I confess, by affording you the means of satisfying these generous tendencies that I hope to seduce and keep you by me."

"But what have I done," asked the other simply, "to merit any gratitude from you? Did you not begin, on the contrary, by acting so generously to my adopted brother?"

"Oh! I do not speak of gratitude," said Adrienne; "we are quits. I speak of friendship and sincere affection, which I now offer you."

"Friendship to me, mademoiselle?"

"Come, come," said Adrienne, with a charming smile, "do not be proud because your position gives you the advantage. I have set my heart on having you for a friend, and you will see that it shall be so. But now that I think of it,— a little late, you will say,— what good wind brings you hither?"

"This morning M. Dagobert received a letter in which he was requested to come to this place to learn some news that would be of the greatest interest to him. Thinking it concerned Marshal Simon's

daughters, he said to me: 'Mother Bunch, you have taken so much interest in those dear children that you must come with me; you shall witness my joy on finding them, and that will be your reward ——'

Adrienne glanced at Rodin. The latter made an affirmative movement of the head, and answered:

"Yes, yes, my dear young lady; it was I who wrote to the brave soldier, but without signing the letter or giving any explanation. You shall know why."

"Then, my dear girl, why did you come alone?" said Adrienne.

"Alas, mademoiselle! on arriving here, it was your kind reception that made me forget my fears."

"What fears?" asked Rodin.

"Knowing that you lived here, mademoiselle, I supposed the letter was from you; I told M. Dagobert so, and he thought the same. When we arrived, his impatience was so great that he asked at the door if the orphans were in this house, and he gave their description. They told him no. Then, in spite of my supplications, he insisted on going to the convent to inquire about them."

"What imprudence!" cried Adrienne.

"After what took place the other night, when he broke in," added Rodin, shrugging his shoulders.

"It was in vain to tell him," returned Mother Bunch, "that the letter did not announce positively that the orphans would be delivered up to him, but that no doubt he would gain some information about them. He refused to hear anything, but said to me: 'If I cannot find them, I will rejoin you. But they were at the convent the day before yesterday, and now that all is discovered they cannot refuse to give them up ——'"

"And with such a man there is no disputing!" said Rodin, with a smile.

"I hope they will not recognize him!" said Adrienne, remembering Baleinier's threats.

"It is not likely," replied Rodin; "they will only refuse him admittance. That will be, I hope, the worst misfortune that will happen. Besides, the magistrate will soon be here with the girls. I am no longer wanted: other cares require my attention. I must seek out Prince Djalma. Only tell me, my dear young lady, where I shall find you, to keep you informed of my discoveries, and to take measures with regard to the young prince, if my inquiries, as I hope, shall be attended with success."

"You will find me in my new house, Rue d'Anjou, formerly Hotel de Beaulieu. But now I think of it," said Adrienne suddenly, after some moments of reflection, "it would not be prudent or proper, on many accounts, to lodge the Prince Djalma in the pavilion I occupied at the

Hotel Saint-Dizier. I saw some time ago a charming little house, all furnished and ready; it only requires some embellishments, that could be completed in twenty-four hours, to make it a delightful residence. Yes, that will be a thousand times preferable," added Mademoiselle de Cardoville, after a new interval of silence; "and I shall thus be able to preserve the strictest incognito."

"What!" cried Rodin, whose projects would be much impeded by this new resolution of the young lady; "you do not wish him to know who you are?"

"I wish Prince Djalma to know absolutely nothing of the anonymous friend who comes to his aid; I desire that my name should not be pronounced before him, and that he should not even know of my existence — at least, for the present. Hereafter — in a month, perhaps — I will see; circumstances will guide me."

"But this incognito," said Rodin, hiding his disappointment, "will be difficult to preserve."

"If the prince had inhabited the lodge, I agree with you; the neighborhood of my aunt would have enlightened him, and this fear is one of the reasons that have induced me to renounce my first project. But the prince will inhabit a distant quarter — the Rue Blanche. Who will inform him of my secret? One of my old friends, M. Norval, you, sir, and this dear girl," pointing to Mother Bunch, "on whose discretion I can depend as on your own, will be my only confidants. My secret will then be quite safe. Besides, we will talk further on this subject to-morrow. You must begin by discovering the retreat of this unfortunate young prince."

Rodin, though much vexed at Adrienne's subtle determination with regard to Djalma, put the best face on the matter and replied:

"Your intentions shall be scrupulously fulfilled, my dear young lady, and to-morrow, with your leave, I hope to give you a good account of what you are pleased to call my providential mission."

"To-morrow, then, I shall expect you with impatience," said Adrienne to Rodin affectionately. "Permit me always to rely upon you, as from this day you may count upon me. You must be indulgent with me, sir, for I see that I shall yet have many counsels, many services to ask of you — though I already owe you so much."

"You will never owe me enough, my dear young lady, never enough," said Rodin, as he moved discreetly toward the door, after bowing to Adrienne.

At the very moment he was going out he found himself face to face with Dagobert.

"Holloa! at last I have caught one!" shouted the soldier, as he seized the Jesuit by the collar with a vigorous hand.

CHAPTER II

EXCUSES



N seeing Dagobert grasp Rodin so roughly by the collar, Mademoiselle de Cardoville exclaimed in terror, as she advanced several steps toward the soldier:

"In the name of Heaven, sir! what are you doing?"

"What am I doing?" echoed the soldier harshly, without relaxing his hold on Rodin, and turning his head toward Adrienne, whom he did not know; "I take this opportunity to squeeze the throat of one of the wretches in the band of that renegade, until he tells me where my poor children are."

"You strangle me," said the Jesuit, in a stifled voice, as he tried to escape from the soldier.

"Where are the orphans, since they are not here, and the convent door has been closed against me?" cried Dagobert, in a voice of thunder.

"Help! help!" gasped Rodin.

"Oh, it is dreadful!" said Adrienne, as, pale and trembling, she held up her clasped hands to Dagobert. "Have mercy, sir! listen to me! listen to him!"

"M. Dagobert!" cried Mother Bunch, seizing with her weak hands the soldier's arm and showing him Adrienne, "this is Mademoiselle de Cardoville. What violence in her presence! and then, you are deceived, doubtless!"

At the name of Mademoiselle de Cardoville, the benefactress of his son, the soldier turned round suddenly and loosened his hold on Rodin. The latter, crimson with rage and suffocation, set about adjusting his collar and his cravat.

"I beg your pardon, mademoiselle," said Dagobert, going toward Adrienne, who was still pale with fright; "I did not know who you were, and the first impulse of anger quite carried me away"

"But what has this gentleman done to you?" said Adrienne. "If you had listened to me you would have learned ——"

"Excuse me if I interrupt you, mademoiselle," said the soldier to Adrienne, in a hollow voice. Then addressing himself to Rodin, who had recovered his coolness, he added: "Thank the lady and begone! If you remain here I will not answer for myself."

"One word only, my dear sir," said Rodin.

"I tell you that if you remain I will not answer for myself!" cried Dagobert, stamping his foot.

"But, for Heaven's sake, tell me the cause of this anger," resumed Adrienne; "above all, do not trust to appearances. Calm yourself and listen."

"Calm myself, mademoiselle!" cried Dagobert, in despair; "I can think only of one thing, mademoiselle,—of the arrival of Marshal Simon; he will be in Paris to-day or to-morrow."

"Is it possible?" said Adrienne. Rodin started with surprise and joy.

"Yesterday evening," proceeded Dagobert, "I received a letter from the marshal; he had landed at Havre. For three days I have taken step after step, hoping that the orphans would be restored to me, as the machinations of those wretches have failed." He pointed to Rodin with a new gesture of impatience. "Well! it is not so. They are conspiring some new infamy. I am prepared for anything."

"But, sir," said Rodin, advancing, "permit me —"

"Begone!" cried Dagobert, whose irritation and anxiety redoubled as he thought how at any moment Marshal Simon might arrive in Paris. "Begone! Were it not for this lady I would at least be revenged on some one."

Rodin made a nod of intelligence to Adrienne, whom he approached prudently, and pointing to Dagobert with a gesture of affectionate commiseration, he said to the latter:

"I will leave you, sir, and the more willingly as I was about to withdraw when you entered." Then coming still closer to Mademoiselle de Cardoville, the Jesuit whispered to her:

"Poor soldier! he is beside himself with grief, and would be incapable of hearing me. Explain it all to him, my dear young lady; he will be nicely caught," added he, with a cunning air. "But, in the mean time," resumed Rodin, feeling in the side-pocket of his great-coat and taking out a small parcel, "let me beg you to give him this, my dear young lady. It is my revenge, and a very good one."

And while Adrienne, holding the little parcel in her hand, looked at the Jesuit with astonishment, the latter, laying his forefinger upon his lip, as if recommending silence, drew backward on tiptoe to the door, and went out after again pointing to Dagobert with a gesture of pity; while the soldier, in sullen dejection, with his head drooping and his

arms crossed upon his bosom, remained deaf to the sewing-girl's earnest consolations.

When Rodin had left the room, Adrienne, approaching the soldier, said to him in her mild voice, with an expression of deep interest :

"Your sudden entry prevented my asking you a question that greatly concerns me. How is your wound?"

"Thank you, mademoiselle," said Dagobert, starting from his painful lethargy, "it is of no consequence, but I have not time to think of it. I am sorry to have been so rough in your presence, and to have driven away that wretch; but 'tis more than I could master. At sight of those people my blood is all up."

"And yet, believe me, you have been too hasty in your judgment. The person who was just now here ——"

"Too hasty, mademoiselle! I do not see him to-day for the first time. He was with that renegade the Abbé d'Aigrigny ——"

"No doubt; and yet he is an honest and excellent man."

"He!" cried Dagobert.

"Yes, for at this moment he is busy about only one thing — restoring to you those dear children!"

"He!" repeated Dagobert, as if he could not believe what he heard.

"He restore me my children?"

"Yes; and sooner, perhaps, than you think for."

"Mademoiselle," said Dagobert abruptly, "he deceives you. You are the dupe of that old rascal."

"No," said Adrienne, shaking her head, with a smile. "I have proofs of his good faith. First of all, it is he who delivers me from this house."

"Is it true?" said Dagobert, quite confounded.

"Very true; and here is, perhaps, something that will reconcile you to him," said Adrienne, as she delivered the small parcel which Rodin had given her as she went out. "Not wishing to exasperate you by his presence, he said to me: 'Give this to that brave soldier; it is my revenge.'"

Dagobert looked at Mademoiselle de Cardoville with surprise, as he mechanically opened the little parcel. When he had unfolded it, and discovered *his* own silver cross, black with age, and the old red, faded ribbon, treasures taken from him at the White Falcon Inn at the same time as his papers, he exclaimed in a broken voice:

"My cross! my cross! It is my cross!"

In the excitement of his joy, he pressed the silver star to his gray mustache.

Adrienne and the other were deeply affected by the emotion of the

soldier, who continued, as he ran toward the door by which Rodin had gone out :

"Next to a service rendered to Marshal Simon, my wife, or son, nothing could be more precious to me. And you answer for this worthy man, mademoiselle, and I have ill-used him in your presence! Oh! he is entitled to reparation, and he shall have it."

So saying, Dagobert left the room precipitately, hastened through two other apartments, gained the staircase, and descending it rapidly, overtook Rodin on the lowest step.

"Sir," said the soldier to him, in an agitated voice, as he seized him by the arm, "you must come upstairs directly"

"You should make up your mind to one thing or the other, my dear sir," said Rodin, stopping good-naturedly; "one moment you tell me to begone, and the next to return. How are we to decide?"

"Just now, sir, I was wrong; and when I am wrong I acknowledge it. I abused and ill-treated you before witnesses; I will make you my apologies before witnesses."

"But, my dear sir — I am much obliged to you — I am in a hurry."

"I cannot help your being in a hurry I tell you I must have you come upstairs directly — or else — or else," resumed Dagobert, taking the hand of the Jesuit and pressing it with as much cordiality as emotion, "or else the happiness you have caused me in returning my cross will not be complete."

"Well, then, my good friend, let us go up."

"And not only have you restored me my cross, for which I have wept many tears, believe me, unknown to any one," cried Dagobert, much affected; "but the young lady told me that, thanks to you, those poor children — but tell me, no false joy, is it really true? My God! is it really true?"

"Ah! ah! Mr. Inquisitive," said Rodin, with a cunning smile. Then he added: "Be perfectly tranquil, my growler; you shall have your two angels back again." And the Jesuit began to ascend the stairs.

"Will they be restored to me to-day?" cried Dagobert, stopping Rodin abruptly, by catching hold of his sleeve.

"Now, really, my good friend," said the Jesuit, "let us come to the point. Are we to go up or down? I do not find fault, but you turn me about like a teetotum."

"You are right. We shall be better able to explain things upstairs. Come with me — quick! quick!" said Dagobert, as, taking the Jesuit by the arm, he hurried him along and brought him triumphantly into the room, where Adrienne and Mother Bunch had remained in much surprise at the soldier's sudden disappearance.



DAGOBERT SURPRISES RODIN.

"Here he is! here he is!" cried Dagobert, as he entered. "Luckily, I caught him at the bottom of the stairs."

"And you have made me come up at a fine pace!" added Rodin, pretty well out of breath.

"Now, sir," said Dagobert, in a grave voice, "I declare, in presence of all, that I was wrong to abuse and ill-treat you. I make you my apology for it, sir; and I acknowledge, with joy, that I owe you—much—oh! very much—and when I owe, I pay."

So saying, Dagobert held out his honest hand to Rodin, who pressed it in a very affable manner and replied:

"Now, really—what is all this about? What great service do you speak of?"

"This!" said Dagobert, holding up the cross before Rodin's eyes. "You do not know, then, what this cross is to me?"

"On the contrary, supposing you would set great store by it, I intended to have the pleasure of delivering it myself. I had brought it for that purpose; but, between ourselves, you gave me so warm a reception that I had not the time——"

"Sir," said Dagobert, in confusion, "I assure you that I sincerely repent of what I have done."

"I know it, my good friend; do not say another word about it. You were, then, much attached to this cross?"

"Attached to it, sir!" cried Dagobert. "Why, this cross," and he kissed it as he spoke, "is my relic. He from whom it came was my saint—my hero—and he had touched it with his hand!"

"Oh!" said Rodin, feigning to regard the cross with as much curiosity as respectful admiration; "did Napoleon—the Great Napoleon—indeed touch with his own hand—that victorious hand!—this noble star of honor?"

"Yes, sir, with his own hand. He placed it there upon my bleeding breast, as a cure for my fifth wound. So, that, you see, were I dying of hunger, I think I should not hesitate betwixt bread and my cross—that I might, in any case, have it on my heart in death. But enough—enough!—let us talk of something else. It is foolish in an old soldier, is it not?" added Dagobert, drawing his hand across his eyes; and then, as if ashamed to deny what he really felt: "Well, then! yes," he resumed, raising his head proudly, and no longer seeking to conceal the tears that rolled down his cheek; "yes, I weep for joy, to have found my cross—my cross, that the emperor gave me with his *victorious* hand, as this worthy man has called it."

"Then blessed be my poor old hand for having restored you the glorious treasure!" said Rodin, with emotion. "In truth," he added,

"the day will be a good one for everybody—as I announced to you this morning in my letter."

"That letter without a signature?" asked the soldier, more and more astonished. "Was it from you?"

"It was I who wrote it. Only, fearing some new snare of the Abbé d'Aigrigny, I did not choose, you understand, to explain myself more clearly."

"Then, I shall see my orphans?"

Rodin nodded affirmatively, with an expression of great good-nature.

"Presently—perhaps immediately," said Adrienne, with a smile. "Well! was I right in telling you that you had not judged this gentleman fairly?"

"Why did he not tell me all this when I came in?" cried Dagobert, almost beside himself with joy

"There was one difficulty in the way, my good friend," said Rodin; "it was, that when you came in you nearly throttled me."

"True; I was too hasty. Once more, I ask your pardon. But was I to blame? I had only seen you with that Abbé d'Aigrigny, and in the first moment ——"

"This dear young lady," said Rodin, bowing to Adrienne, "will tell you that I have been, without knowing it, the accomplice in many perfidious actions; but as soon as I began to see my way through the darkness, I quitted the evil course on which I had entered, and returned to that which is honest, just, and true."

Adrienne nodded affirmatively to Dagobert, who appeared to consult her look.

"If I did not sign the letter that I wrote to you, my good friend, it was partly from fear that my name might inspire suspicion; and if I asked you to come hither, instead of to the convent, it was that I had some dread—like this dear young lady—lest you might be recognized by the porter or by the gardener, your affair of the other night rendering such a recognition somewhat dangerous."

"But M. Baleinier knows all; I forgot that," said Adrienne, with uneasiness. "He threatened to denounce M. Dagobert and his son, if I made any complaint."

"Do not be alarmed, my dear young lady; it will soon be for you to dictate conditions," replied Rodin. "Leave that to me; and as for you, my good friend, your torments are now finished."

"Yes," said Adrienne, "an upright and worthy magistrate has gone to the convent to fetch Marshal Simon's daughters. He will bring them hither; but he thought, with me, that it would be most proper for them to take up their abode in my house. I cannot, however, come to

this decision without your consent, for it is to you that these orphans were intrusted by their mother."

"You wish to take her place with regard to them, mademoiselle?" replied Dagobert; "I can only thank you with all my heart, for myself and for the children. But, as the lesson has been a sharp one, I must beg to remain at the door of their chamber, night and day. If they go out with you, I must be allowed to follow them at a little distance, so as to keep them in view, just like *Spoilsport*, who has proved a better guardian than myself. When the marshal is once here — it will be in a day or two — my post will be relieved. Heaven grant it may be soon!"

"Yes," replied Rodin, in a firm voice, "Heaven grant he may arrive soon, for he will have to demand a terrible reckoning of the Abbé d'Aigrigny for the persecution of his daughters; and yet the marshal does not know all."

"And don't you tremble for the renegade?" asked Dagobert, as he thought how the marquis would soon find himself face to face with the marshal.

"I never care for cowards and traitors," answered Rodin; "and when Marshal Simon returns ——"

Then, after a pause of some seconds, he continued:

"If he will do me the honor to hear me, he shall be edified as to the conduct of the Abbé d'Aigrigny. The marshal knows that his dearest friends, as well as himself, have been victims of the hatred of that dangerous man."

"How so?" said Dagobert.

"Why, yourself, for instance," replied Rodin; "you are an example of what I advance."

"I!"

"Do you think it was mere chance that brought about the scene at the White Falcon Inn, near Leipsic?"

"Who told you of that scene?" said Dagobert, in astonishment.

"Where you accepted the challenge of Morok," continued the Jesuit, without answering Dagobert's question, "and so fell into a trap, or else refused it, and were then arrested, for want of papers, and thrown into prison as a vagabond, with these poor children. Now, do you know the object of this violence? It was to prevent your being here on the 13th of February"

"But the more I hear, sir," said Adrienne, "the more I am alarmed at the audacity of the Abbé d'Aigrigny and the extent of the means he has at his command. Really," she resumed, with increasing surprise, "if your words were not entitled to absolute belief ——"

"You would doubt their truth, mademoiselle?" said Dagobert. "It

is like me. Bad as he is, I cannot think that this renegade had relations with a wild-beast showman as far off as Saxony; and then, how could he know that I and the children were to pass through Leipsic? It is impossible, my good man."

"In fact, sir," resumed Adrienne, "I fear that you are deceived by your dislike (a very legitimate one) of Abbé d'Aigrigny, and that you ascribe to him an almost fabulous degree of power and extent of influence."

After a moment's silence, during which Rodin looked first at Adrienne and then at Dagobert with a kind of pity, he resumed:

"How could the Abbé d'Aigrigny have your cross in his possession, if he had no connection with Morok?"

"That is true, sir," said Dagobert; "joy prevented me from reflecting. But how, indeed, did my cross come into your hands?"

"By means of the Abbé d'Aigrigny's having precisely those relations with Leipsic of which you and the young lady seem to doubt."

"But how did my cross get to Paris?"

"Tell me; you were arrested at Leipsic for want of papers—is it not so?"

"Yes; but I could never understand how my passports and money disappeared from my knapsack. I thought I must have had the misfortune to lose them."

Rodin shrugged his shoulders and replied:

"You were robbed of them at the White Falcon Inn by Goliath, one of Morok's servants; and the latter sent the papers and the cross to the Abbé d'Aigrigny to prove that he had succeeded in executing his orders with respect to the orphans and yourself. It was the day before yesterday that I obtained the key of that dark machination. Cross and papers were amongst the stores of Abbé d'Aigrigny; the papers formed a considerable bundle, and he might have missed them; but hoping to see you this morning, and knowing how a soldier of the empire values his cross, his sacred relic, as you call it, my good friend, I did not hesitate. I put the relic into my pocket. After all, said I, it is only restitution, and my delicacy perhaps exaggerates this breach of trust."

"You could not have done a better action," said Adrienne; "and, for my part, because of the interest I feel for M. Dagobert, I take it as a personal favor."

"But, sir," after a moment's silence, she resumed with anxiety, "what terrible power must be at the command of M. d'Aigrigny, for him to have such extensive and formidable relations in a foreign country!"

"Silence!" said Rodin, in a low voice, and looking round him with an air of alarm. "Silence! In Heaven's name do not ask me about it!"

CHAPTER III

REVELATIONS

MADEMOISELLE DE CARDOVILLE, much astonished at the alarm displayed by Rodin when she had asked him for some explanation of the formidable and far-reaching power of the Abbé d'Aigrigny, said to him:

"Why, sir, what is there so strange in the question that I have just asked you?"

After a moment's silence, Rodin cast his looks all around with well-feigned uneasiness, and replied in a whisper:

"Once more, mademoiselle, do not question me on so fearful a subject. The walls of this house may have ears."

Adrienne and Dagobert looked at each other with growing surprise. Mother Bunch, by an instinct of incredible force, continued to regard Rodin with invincible suspicion. Sometimes she stole a glance at him, as if trying to penetrate the mask of this man who filled her with fear. At one moment the Jesuit encountered her anxious gaze obstinately fixed upon him; immediately he nodded to her with the greatest amenity. The young girl, alarmed at finding herself observed, turned away with a shudder.

"No, no, my dear young lady," resumed Rodin, with a sigh, as he saw Mademoiselle de Cardoville astonished at his silence; "do not question me on the subject of Abbé d'Aigrigny's power."

"But, to persist, sir," said Adrienne; "why this hesitation to answer? What do you fear?"

"Ah, my dear young lady," said Rodin, shuddering, "those people are so powerful! their animosity is so terrible!"

"Be satisfied, sir; I owe you too much for my support ever to fail you."

"Ah, my dear young lady," cried Rodin, as if hurt by the supposition; "think better of me, I entreat you. Is it for myself that I fear? No, no; I am too obscure, too inoffensive; but it is for you, for Marshal

Simon, for the other members of your family, that all is to be feared. Oh, my dear young lady! let me beg you to ask no questions. There are secrets which are fatal to those who possess them."

"But, sir, is it not better to know the perils with which one is threatened?"

"When you know the maneuvers of your enemy, you may at least defend yourself," said Dagobert. "I prefer an attack in broad daylight to an ambuscade."

"And I assure you," resumed Adrienne, "the few words you have spoken cause me a vague uneasiness."

"Well, if I must, my dear young lady," replied the Jesuit, appearing to make a great effort, "since you do not understand my hints, I will be more explicit; but remember," added he, in a deeply serious tone, "that you have persevered in forcing me to tell you what you had perhaps better not have known ——"

"Speak, sir, I pray you, speak," said Adrienne.

Drawing about him Adrienne, Dagobert, and Mother Bunch, Rodin said to them in a low voice and with a mysterious air:

"Have you never heard of a powerful association which extends its net over all the earth, and counts its disciples, agents, and fanatics in every class of society—which has had, and often has still, the ear of kings and nobles—which, in a word, can raise its creatures to the highest positions, and with a word can reduce them again to the nothingness from which it alone could uplift them?"

"Good Heaven, sir!" said Adrienne, "what formidable association? Until now I never heard of it."

"I believe you; and yet your ignorance on this subject greatly astonishes me, my dear young lady."

"And why should it astonish you?"

"Because you lived some time with your aunt, and must have often seen the Abbé d'Aigrigny"

"I lived at the princess's, but not with her; for a thousand reasons she had inspired me with warrantable aversion."

"In truth, my dear young lady, my remark was ill-judged. It was there above all, and particularly in your presence, that they would keep silence with regard to this association; and yet to it alone did the Princess de Saint-Dizier owe her formidable influence in the world during the last reign. Well, then; know this—it is the aid of that association which renders the Abbé d'Aigrigny so dangerous a man. By it he was enabled to follow and to reach divers members of your family,—some in Siberia, some in India, others on the heights of the American mountains; but, as I have told you, it was only the day before yes—

terday, and by chance, that, examining the papers of Abbé d'Aigrigny, I found the trace of his connection with this Company, of which he is the most active and able chief."



"But the name, sir,—the name of this Company?" said Adrienne.

"Well, it is ——" But Rodin stopped short.

"It is," repeated Adrienne, who was now as much interested as Dagobert and the seamstress; "it is ——"

Rodin looked all round him, beckoned all the actors in this scene to draw nearer, and said in a whisper, laying great stress upon the words:

"It is — the Society of Jesus!" And he again shuddered.

"The Jesuits!" cried Mademoiselle de Cardoville, unable to restrain a burst of laughter, which was the more buoyant as, from the mysterious precautions of Rodin, she had expected some very different revelation. "The Jesuits!" she resumed, still laughing. "They have no existence, except in books; they are frightful historical personages certainly; but why should you put forward Madame de Saint-Dizier and M. d'Aigrigny in that character? Such as they are, they have done quite enough to justify my aversion and disdain."

After listening in silence to Mademoiselle de Cardoville, Rodin continued, with a grave and agitated air:

"Your blindness frightens me, my dear young lady; the past should have given you some anxiety for the future, since more than any one you have already suffered from the fatal influence of this Company, whose existence you regard as a dream."

"I, sir?" said Adrienne, with a smile, although a little surprised.

"You."

"Under what circumstances?"

"You ask me this question, my dear young lady! you ask me this question! — and yet you have been confined here as a mad person! Is it not enough to tell you that the master of this house is one of the most devoted lay members of the Company, and therefore the blind instrument of the Abbé d'Aigrigny?"

"So," said Adrienne, this time without smiling, "Dr. Baleinier —"

"Obeyed the Abbé d'Aigrigny, the most formidable chief of that formidable society. He employs his genius for evil; but I must confess he is a man of genius. Therefore, it is upon him that you and yours must fix all your doubts and suspicions; it is against him that you must be on your guard. For, believe me, I know him, and he does not look upon the game as lost. You must be prepared for new attacks, doubtless of another kind, but only the more dangerous on that account —"

"Luckily, you give us notice," said Dagobert, "and you will be on our side."

"I can do very little, my good friends; but that little is at the service of honest people," said Rodin.

"Now," said Adrienne, with a thoughtful air, completely persuaded by Rodin's air of conviction, "I can explain the inconceivable influence that my aunt exercised in the world. I ascribed it chiefly to her relations with persons in power; I thought that she, like the Abbé d'Aigrigny, was concerned in dark intrigues, for which religion served as a veil, but I was far from believing what you tell me."

"How many things you have got to learn!" resumed Rodin. "If you knew, my dear young lady, with what art these people surround you, without your being aware of it, by agents devoted to themselves! Every one of your steps is known to them, when they have any interest in such knowledge. Thus, little by little, they act upon you — slowly, cautiously, darkly. They circumvent you by every possible means, from flattery to terror; seduce or frighten in order at last to rule you, without your being conscious of their authority. Such is their object, and I must confess they pursue it with detestable ability"

Rodin had spoken with so much sincerity that Adrienne trembled; then, reproaching herself with these fears, she resumed:

"And yet, no, I can never believe in so infernal a power; the might of priestly ambition belongs to another age. Heaven be praised, it has disappeared forever!"

"Yes, certainly, it is out of sight; for they now know how to disperse and disappear when circumstances require it. But then are they the most dangerous, for suspicion is laid asleep, and they keep watch in the dark. Oh! my dear young lady, if you knew their frightful ability! In my hatred of all that is oppressive, cowardly, and hypocritical I had studied the history of that terrible society before I knew that the Abbé d'Aigrigny belonged to it. Oh! it is dreadful. If you knew what means they employ! When I tell you that, thanks to their diabolical devices, the most pure and devoted appearances often conceal the most horrible snares ——"

Rodin's eye rested, as if *by chance*, on the hunchback; but, seeing that Adrienne did not take the hint, the Jesuit continued:

"In a word, are you not exposed to their pursuits? have they any interest in gaining you over? Oh! from that moment suspect all that surround you; suspect the most noble attachments, the most tender affections, for these monsters sometimes succeed in corrupting your best friends, and making a terrible use of them, in proportion to the blindness of your confidence."

"Oh, it is impossible," cried Adrienne, in horror. "You must exaggerate. No! hell itself never dreamed of more frightful treachery!"

"Alas, my dear young lady! one of your relations, M. Hardy, the most loyal and generous-hearted man that could be, has been the victim of some such infamous treachery. Do you know what we learned from the reading of your ancestor's will? Why, that he died the victim of the malevolence of these people; and now, at the lapse of a hundred and fifty years, his descendants are still exposed to the hate of that indestructible society"

"Oh, sir! it terrifies me," said Adrienne, feeling her heart sink within her. "But are there no weapons against such attacks?"

"Prudence, my dear young lady, the most watchful caution, the most incessant study, and suspicion of all that approach you."

"But such a life would be frightful! It is a torture to be the victim of continual suspicions, doubts, and fears."

"Without doubt! They know it well, the wretches! That constitutes their strength. They often triumph by the very excess of the precautions taken against them. Thus, my dear young lady, and you, brave and worthy soldier, in the name of all that is dear to you, be on your guard, and do not lightly impart your confidence. Be on your guard, for you have nearly fallen the victims of those people. They will always be your implacable enemies. And you, also, poor interesting girl!" added the Jesuit, speaking to Mother Bunch, "follow my advice,—fear these people; sleep, as the proverb says, with one eye open."

"I, sir!" said the workgirl. "What have I done? what have I to fear?"

"What have you done? Dear me! Do not you tenderly love this young lady, your protectress? have you not attempted to assist her? Are you not the adopted sister of the son of this intrepid soldier, the brave Agricola? Alas, poor girl! are not these sufficient claims to their hatred, in spite of your obscurity? Nay, my dear young lady! do not think that I exaggerate. Reflect! only reflect! Think what I have just said to the faithful companion-in-arms of Marshal Simon with regard to his imprisonment at Leipsic. Think what happened to yourself, when, against all law and reason, you were brought hither. Then you will see that there is nothing exaggerated in the picture I have drawn of the secret power of this Company. Be always on your guard, and, in doubtful cases, do not fear to apply to me. In three days I have learned enough by my own experience with regard to their manner of acting to be able to point out to you many a snare, device, and danger, and to protect you from them."

"In any such case, sir," replied Mademoiselle de Cardoville, "my interest, as well as gratitude, would point to you as my best counselor."

According to the skillful tactics of the sons of Loyola, who sometimes deny their own existence in order to escape from an adversary, and sometimes proclaim with audacity the living power of their organization in order to intimidate the feeble, Rodin had laughed in the face of the bailiff of Cardoville when the latter had spoken of the existence of the Jesuits; while now, at this moment, picturing their means of action, he endeavored, and he succeeded in the endeavor, to impregnate the mind of Mademoiselle de Cardoville with some germs of doubt, which were gradually to develop themselves by reflection, and serve hereafter the dark projects that he meditated.

Mother Bunch still felt considerable alarm with regard to Rodin. Yet, since she had heard the fatal powers of the formidable Order revealed to Adrienne, the young seamstress, far from suspecting the Jesuit of having the audacity to speak thus of a society of which he was himself a member, felt grateful to him in spite of herself for the important advice that he had just given her patroness. The side-glance which she now cast upon him (which Rodin also detected, for he watched the young girl with sustained attention) was full of gratitude, mingled with surprise. Guessing the nature of this impression, and wishing entirely to remove her unfavorable opinion, and also to anticipate a revelation which would be made sooner or later, the Jesuit appeared to have forgotten something of great importance, and exclaimed, striking his forehead:

“What was I thinking of?”

Then, speaking to Mother Bunch, he added:

“Do you know where your sister is, my dear girl?”

Disconcerted and saddened by this unexpected question, the work-woman answered with a blush, for she remembered her last interview with the brilliant Bacchanal Queen:

“I have not seen my sister for some days, sir.”

“Well, my dear girl, she is not very comfortable,” said Rodin; “I promised one of her friends to send her some little assistance. I have applied to a charitable person, and that is what I received for her.”

So saying, he drew from his pocket a sealed roll of coin, which he delivered to Mother Bunch, who was now both surprised and affected.

“You have a sister in trouble, and I know nothing of it?” said Adrienne hastily. “This is not right of you, my child!”

“Do not blame her,” said Rodin. “First of all, she did not know that her sister was in distress, and, secondly, she could not ask you, my dear young lady, to interest yourself about her.”

As Mademoiselle de Cardoville looked at Rodin with astonishment, he added, again speaking to the hunchback:

“Is not that true, my dear girl?”

“Yes, sir,” said the seamstress, casting down her eyes and blushing. Then she added, hastily and anxiously:

“But when did you see my sister, sir? where is she? how did she fall into distress?”

“All that would take too long to tell you, my dear girl; but go as soon as possible to the green-grocer’s in the Rue Clovis, and ask to speak to your sister as from M. Charlemagne or M. Rodin, which you please, for I am equally well known in that house by my Christian name as by my surname, and then you will learn all about it. Only tell your sis-

ter that, if she behaves well and keeps to her good resolutions, there are some who will continue to look after her."

More and more surprised, Mother Bunch was about to answer Rodin, when the door opened and M. de Gernande entered. The countenance of the magistrate was grave and sad.

"Marshal Simon's daughters?" cried Mademoiselle de Cardoville.

"Unfortunately, they are not with me," answered the judge.

"Then, where are they, sir? What have they done with them? The day before yesterday they were in the convent!" cried Dagobert, overwhelmed by this complete destruction of his hopes.

Hardly had the soldier pronounced these words, when, profiting by the impulse which gathered all the actors in this scene about the magistrate, Rodin withdrew discreetly toward the door, and disappeared without any one perceiving his absence.

While the soldier, thus suddenly thrown back to the depths of his despair, looked at M. de Gernande, waiting with anxiety for the answer, Adrienne said to the magistrate:

"But, sir, when you applied at the convent, what explanation did the superior give on the subject of these young girls?"

"The lady-superior refused to give any explanation, mademoiselle. 'You pretend,' said she, 'that the young persons of whom you speak are detained here against their will. Since the law gives you the right of entering this house, make your search.' 'But, madame, please to answer me positively,' said I to the superior; 'do you declare that you know nothing of the young girls whom I have come to claim.' 'I have nothing to say on this subject, sir. You assert that you are authorized to make a search; make it.' Not being able to get any other explanation," continued the magistrate, "I searched all parts of the convent, and had every door opened—but, unfortunately, I could find no trace of these young ladies."

"They must have sent them elsewhere," cried Dagobert; "who knows?—perhaps, ill. They will kill them—oh, God! they will kill them!" cried he, in a heart-rending tone.

"After such a refusal, what is to be done? Pray, sir, give us your advice; you are our providence," said Adrienne, turning to speak to Rodin, who she fancied was behind her. "What is your ——"

Then, perceiving that the Jesuit had suddenly disappeared, she said to Mother Bunch, with uneasiness:

"Where is M. Rodin?"

"I do not know, mademoiselle," answered the girl, looking round her; "he is no longer here."

"It is strange," said Adrienne, "to disappear so abruptly!"

"I told you he was a traitor!" cried Dagobert, stamping with rage; "they are all in a plot together."

"No, no," said Mademoiselle de Cardoville; "do not think that. But the absence is not the less to be regretted, for, under these difficult circumstances, he might have given us very useful information, thanks to the position he occupied at M. d'Aigrigny's."

"I confess, mademoiselle, that I rather reckoned upon it," said M. de Gernande; "and I returned hither, not only to inform you of the fruitless result of my search, but also to seek from the upright and honorable man, who so courageously unveiled these odious machinations, the aid of his counsels in this contingency."

Strangely enough, for the last few moments Dagobert was so completely absorbed in thought that he paid no attention to the words of the magistrate, however important to him. He did not even perceive the departure of M. de Gernande, who retired after promising Adrienne that he would neglect no means to arrive at the truth in regard to the disappearance of the orphans.

Uneasy at this silence, wishing to quit the house immediately and induce Dagobert to accompany her, Adrienne, after exchanging a rapid glance with Mother Bunch, was advancing toward the soldier, when hasty steps were heard from without the chamber, and a manly, sonorous voice exclaiming with impatience, "Where is he; where is he?"

At the sound of this voice Dagobert seemed to rouse himself with a start, made a sudden bound, and, with a loud cry, rushed toward the door. It opened.

Marshal Simon appeared on the threshold!

CHAPTER IV

PIERRE SIMON

MARSHAL PIERRE SIMON, Duke de Ligny, was a man of tall stature, plainly dressed in a blue frock-coat, buttoned up to the throat, with a red ribbon tied to the top button-hole. You could not have wished to see a more frank, honest, and chivalrous cast of countenance than the marshal's. He had a broad forehead, an aquiline nose, a well-formed chin, and a complexion bronzed by exposure to the Indian sun. His hair, cut very short, was inclined to gray about the temples; but his eyebrows were still as black as his large, hanging mustache. His walk was free and bold, and his decided movements showed his military impetuosity. A man of the people, a man of war and action, the frank cordiality of his address invited friendliness and sympathy. As enlightened as he was intrepid, as generous as he was sincere, his manly, plebeian pride was the most remarkable part of his character. As others are proud of their high birth, so was he of his obscure origin, because it was ennobled by the fine qualities of his father, the rigid republican, the intelligent and laborious artisan, who for the space of forty years had been the example and the glory of his fellow-workmen. In accepting with gratitude the aristocratic title which the emperor had bestowed upon him, Pierre Simon acted with that delicacy which receives from a friendly hand a perfectly useless gift, and estimates it according to the intention of the giver. The religious veneration of Pierre Simon for the emperor had never been blind; in proportion as his devotion and love for his idol were instructive and necessary, his admiration was serious and founded upon reason. Far from resembling those swashbucklers who love fighting for its own sake, Marshal Simon not only admired his hero as the greatest captain in the world, but he admired him, above all, because he knew that the emperor had only accepted war in the hope of one day being able to dictate universal peace; for if peace obtained by glory and strength is great, fruitful, and magnificent,

peace yielded by weakness and cowardice is sterile, disastrous, and dishonoring. The son of a workman, Pierre Simon still further admired the emperor because that imperial parvenu had always known how to



make that popular heart beat nobly, and remembering the people, from the masses of whom he first arose, had invited them fraternally to share in regal and aristocratic pomp.

.

When Marshal Simon entered the room his countenance was much agitated. At sight of Dagobert a flash of joy illumined his features; he rushed toward the soldier, extending his arms, and exclaimed:

“My friend! my old friend!”

Dagobert answered this affectionate salute with silent emotion.

Then the marshal, disengaging himself from his arms, and fixing his moist eyes upon him, said to him in so agitated a voice that his lips trembled:

“Well, didst arrive in time for the 13th of February?”

“Yes, general; but everything is postponed for four months.”

“And my wife?—my child?”

At this question Dagobert shuddered, hung down his head, and was silent.

“They are not, then, here?” asked Simon, with more surprise than uneasiness. “They told me they were not at your house, but that I should find you here—and I came immediately. Are they not with you?”

“General,” said Dagobert, becoming deadly pale; “general ——”

Drying the drops of cold sweat that stood upon his forehead, he was unable to articulate a word, for his voice was checked in his parched throat.

“You frighten me!” exclaimed Pierre Simon, becoming pale as the soldier, and seizing him by the arm.

At this, Adrienne advanced with a countenance full of grief and sympathy; seeing the cruel embarrassment of Dagobert, she wished to come to his assistance, and she said to Pierre Simon, in a mild but agitated voice:

“Marshal, I am Mademoiselle de Cardoville—a relation of your dear children.”

Pierre Simon turned round suddenly, as much struck with the dazzling beauty of Adrienne as with the words she had just pronounced. He stammered out in his surprise:

“You, mademoiselle—a relation—of *my children*!”

He laid a stress on the last words and looked at Dagobert in a kind of stupor.

“Yes, marshal, *your children*,” hastily replied Adrienne; “and the love of those charming twin-sisters ——”

“Twin-sisters!” cried Pierre Simon, interrupting Mademoiselle de Cardoville with an outburst of joy impossible to describe. “Two daughters instead of one! Oh, what happiness for their mother! Pardon me, mademoiselle, for being so impolite,” he continued; “and so little grateful for what you tell me. But you will understand it; I have been

seventeen years without seeing my wife; I come, and I find three loved beings instead of two. Thanks, mademoiselle; would I could express all the gratitude I owe you! You are our relation; this is no doubt your house; my wife and children are with you. Is it so? You think that my sudden appearance might be prejudicial to them? I will wait; but, mademoiselle, you, that I am certain are good as fair,—pity my impatience,—will make haste to prepare them to receive me ——”

More and more agitated, Dagobert avoided the marshal's gaze, and trembled like a leaf.

Adrienne cast down her eyes without answering. Her heart sunk within her at thought of dealing the terrible blow to Marshal Simon.

The latter, astonished at this silence, looking at Adrienne, then at the soldier, became first uneasy and at last alarmed.

“Dagobert!” he exclaimed, “something is concealed from me!”

“General!” stammered the soldier, “I assure you—I—I ——”

“Mademoiselle!” cried Pierre Simon, “I conjure you, in pity, speak to me frankly! my anxiety is horrible. My first fears return upon me. What is it? Are my wife and daughters ill? Are they in danger? Oh, speak! speak!”

“Your daughters, marshal,” said Adrienne, “have been rather unwell since their long journey; but they are in no danger.”

“Oh, Heaven! it is my wife!”

“Have courage, sir!” said Mademoiselle de Cardoville sadly. “Alas! you must seek consolation in the affection of the two angels that remain to you.”

“General!” said Dagobert, in a firm, grave tone, “I returned from Siberia—alone with your two daughters.”

“And their mother! their mother!” cried Simon, in a voice of despair.

“I set out with the two orphans the day after her death,” said the soldier.

“Dead?” exclaimed Pierre Simon, overwhelmed by the stroke; “dead?”

A mournful silence was the only answer.

The marshal staggered beneath this unexpected shock, leaned on the back of a chair for support, and then, sinking into the seat, concealed his face with his hands. For some minutes nothing was heard but stifled sobs, for not only had Pierre Simon idolized his wife, but, by one of those singular compromises that a man long cruelly tried sometimes makes with destiny, Pierre Simon, with the fatalism of loving souls, thought he had a right to reckon upon happiness after so many years of suffering, and had not for a moment doubted that he should

find his wife and child—a double consolation reserved to him after going through so much. Very different from certain people whom the habit of misfortune renders less exacting, Simon had reckoned upon happiness as complete as had been his misery. His wife and child were the sole, indispensable conditions of this felicity, and, had the mother survived her daughters, she would have no more replaced them in his eyes than they did her. Weakness or avarice of the heart, so it was; we insist upon this singularity, because the consequences of these incessant and painful regrets exercised a great influence on the future life of Marshal Simon. Adrienne and Dagobert had respected the overwhelming grief of this unfortunate man. When he had given a free course to his tears, he raised his manly countenance, now of marble paleness, drew his hand across his blood-shot eyes, rose, and said to Adrienne:

“Pardon me, mademoiselle; I could not conquer my first emotion. Permit me to retire. I have cruel details to ask of the worthy friend who only quitted my wife at the last moment. Have the kindness to let me see my children—my poor orphans!——”

And the marshal’s voice again broke.

“Marshal,” said Mademoiselle de Cardoville, “just now we were expecting your dear children; unfortunately, we have been deceived in our hopes.”

Pierre Simon first looked at Adrienne without answering, as if he had not heard or understood.

“But console yourself,” resumed the young girl; “we have yet no reason to despair.”

“To despair?” repeated the marshal mechanically, looking by turns at Mademoiselle de Cardoville and Dagobert; “to despair?—of what, in Heaven’s name?”

“Of seeing your children, marshal,” said Adrienne; “the presence of their father will facilitate the search.”

“The search!” cried Pierre Simon. “Then my daughters are not here?”

“No, sir,” said Adrienne, at length; “they have been taken from the affectionate care of the excellent man who brought them from Russia, to be removed to a convent.”

“Wretch!” cried Pierre Simon, advancing toward Dagobert, with a menacing and terrible aspect; “you shall answer to me for all!”

“Oh, sir, do not blame him!” cried Mademoiselle de Cardoville.

“General,” said Dagobert, in a tone of mournful resignation, “I merit your anger. It is my fault. Forced to absent myself from Paris, I intrusted the children to my wife; her confessor turned her head, and persuaded her that your daughters would be better in a convent than

at our house. She believed him and let them be conveyed there. Now they say at the convent that they do not know where they are. This is the truth; do what you will with me; I have only to silently endure."

"This is infamous!" cried Pierre Simon, pointing to Dagobert with a gesture of despairing indignation. "In whom can a man confide if he has deceived me? Oh, my God!"

"Stay, marshal! do not blame him," repeated Mademoiselle de Cardoville; "do not think so! He has risked life and honor to rescue your children from the convent. He is not the only one who has failed in this attempt. Just now, a magistrate—despite his character and authority—was not more successful. His firmness toward the superior, his minute search of the convent, were all in vain. Up to this time it has been impossible to find these unfortunate children."

"But where's this convent!" cried Marshal Simon, raising his head, his face all pale and agitated with grief and rage. "Where is it? Do these vermin know what a father is, deprived of his children?"

At the moment when Marshal Simon, turning toward Dagobert, pronounced these words, Rodin, holding Rose and Blanche by the hand, appeared at the open door of the chamber. On hearing the marshal's exclamation, he started with surprise, and a flash of diabolical joy lit up his grim countenance; for he had not expected to meet Pierre Simon so opportunely.

Mademoiselle de Cardoville was the first to perceive the presence of Rodin. She exclaimed, as she hastened toward him:

"Oh! I was not deceived. He is still our providence."

"My poor children!" said Rodin, in a low voice, to the young girls, as he pointed to Pierre Simon, "this is your father!"

"Sir!" cried Adrienne, following close upon Rose and Blanche. "Your children are here!"

As Simon turned round abruptly, his two daughters threw themselves into his arms. Here was a long silence, broken only by sobs and kisses and exclamations of joy

"Come forward at least, and enjoy the good you have done!" said Mademoiselle de Cardoville, drying her eyes, and turning toward Rodin, who, leaning against the door, seemed to contemplate this scene with deep emotion.

Dagobert, at sight of Rodin bringing back the children, was at first struck with stupor and unable to move a step; but, hearing the words of Adrienne, and yielding to a burst of almost insane gratitude, he threw himself on his knees before the Jesuit, joined his hands together, and exclaimed in a broken voice:

"You have saved me, by bringing back these children."

"Oh, bless you, sir!" said Mother Bunch, yielding to the general current.

"My good friends, this is too much," said Rodin, as if his emotions were beyond his strength; "this is really too much for me. Excuse me to the marshal, and tell him that I am repaid by the sight of his happiness."

"Pray, sir," said Adrienne, "let the marshal at least have the opportunity to see and know you."

"Oh, remain! you that have saved us all!" cried Dagobert, trying to stop Rodin.

"Providence, you know, my dear young lady, does not trouble itself about the good that is done, but the good that remains to do," said Rodin, with an accent of playful kindness. "Must I not think of Prince Djalma? My task is not finished, and moments are precious. Come," he added, disengaging himself gently from Dagobert's hold, "come—the day has been as good a one as I had hoped. The Abbé d'Aigrigny is unmasked; you are free, my dear young lady; you have recovered your cross, my brave soldier; Mother Bunch is sure of a protectress; the marshal has found his children. I have my share in all these joys; it is a full share—my heart is satisfied. Adieu, my friends, till we meet again."

So saying, Rodin waved his hand affectionately to Adrienne, Dagobert, and the hunchback and withdrew, waving his hand with a look of delight on Marshal Simon, who, seated between his daughters, held them in his arms, and covered them with tears and kisses, remaining quite indifferent to all that was passing around him.

An hour after this scene Mademoiselle de Cardoville and the seamstress, Marshal Simon, his two daughters, and Dagobert, quitted Dr. Baleinier's asylum.

In terminating this episode, a few words by way of moral, with regard to lunatic asylums and convents, may not be out of place. We have said, and we repeat, that the laws which apply to the superintendence of lunatic asylums appear to us insufficient. Facts that have recently transpired before the courts, and other facts that have been privately communicated to us, evidently prove this insufficiency. Doubtless magistrates have full power to visit lunatic asylums. They are even required to make such visits. But we know, from the best authority, that the numerous and pressing occupations of magistrates, whose number is often out of proportion with the labor imposed upon them, render these inspections so rare that they are, so to speak, illusory. It appears therefore to us that it would be advisable to institute a system

of inspections, at least twice a month, specially designed for lunatic asylums, and intrusted to a physician and a magistrate, so that every complaint may be submitted to a double examination. Doubtless the law is sufficient when its ministers are fully informed; but how many formalities, how many difficulties, must be gone through, before they can be so, particularly when the unfortunate creature who needs their assistance, already suspected, isolated, and imprisoned, has no friend to come forward in defense and demand in his or her name the protection of the authorities! Is it not imperative, therefore, on the civil power to meet these necessities by a periodical and well-organized system of inspection?

What we here say of lunatic asylums will apply with still greater force to convents for women, seminaries, and houses inhabited by religious bodies. Recent and notorious facts, with which all France has rung, have unfortunately proved that violence, forcible detention, barbarous usage, abduction of minors, and illegal imprisonment, accompanied by torture, are occurrences which, if not frequent, are at least possible in religious houses. It required singular accidents, audacious and cynical brutalities, to bring these detestable actions to public knowledge. How many other victims have been, and perhaps still are, entombed in those large, silent mansions, where no profane look may penetrate, and which through the privileges of the clergy escape the superintendence of the civil power. Is it not deplorable that these dwellings should not also be subject to periodical inspection by visitors—consisting, if it be desired, of a priest, a magistrate, and some delegate of the municipal authorities?

If nothing takes place but what is legal, humane, and charitable in these establishments, which have all the character and incur all the responsibility of public institutions, why this resistance, this furious indignation of the church party when any mention is made of touching what they call their privileges?

There is something higher than the constitutions devised at Rome,—we mean the law of France—the common law—which grants to all protection, but which in return exacts from all respect and obedience.

CHAPTER V

THE EAST INDIAN IN PARIS

THREE days had passed since Mademoiselle de Cardoville had left Dr. Baleinier's. The following scene took place in a little dwelling in the Rue Blanche, to which Djalma had been conducted in the name of his unknown protector.

Fancy to yourself a pretty, circular apartment, hung with Indian drapery, with purple figures on a gray ground, just relieved by a few threads of gold. The ceiling, toward the center, is concealed by similar hangings tied together by a thick silken cord; the two ends of this cord, unequal in length, terminated, instead of tassels, in two tiny Indian lamps of gold filigree-work, marvelously finished. By one of those ingenious combinations so common in barbarous countries, these lamps served also to burn perfumes. Plates of blue crystal, let in between the openings of the arabesques and illumined by the interior light, shone with so limpid an azure that the golden lamps seemed starred with transparent sapphires. Light clouds of whitish vapor rose incessantly from these lamps, and spread all around their balmy odor. Daylight was only admitted to this room (it was about two o'clock in the afternoon) through a little greenhouse on the other side of a door of plate glass, made to slide into the thickness of the wall by means of a groove. A Chinese shade was arranged so as to hide or replace this glass at pleasure.

Some dwarf palm-trees, plantains, and other Indian productions, with thick leaves of a metallic green, arranged in clusters in this conservatory, formed, as it were, the background to two large variegated bushes of exotic flowers, which were separated by a narrow path, paved with yellow and blue Japanese tiles, running to the foot of the glass. The daylight, already much dimmed by the leaves through which it passed, took a hue of singular mildness as it mingled with the azure luster of the perfumed lamps and the crimson brightness of the fire in the tall chimney of oriental porphyry.

In the semi-obscurity of this apartment, impregnated with sweet odors and the aromatic vapor of Persian tobacco, a man with brown, hanging locks, dressed in a long robe of dark green, fastened round the



waist by a parti-colored sash, was kneeling upon a magnificent Turkey carpet, carefully feeding the golden bowl of a hookah; the long, flexible tube of this pipe, after rolling its folds upon the carpet, like a scarlet

serpent with silver scales, rested between the slender fingers of Djalma, who was reclining negligently on a divan.

The young prince was bareheaded; his jet-black hair, parted on the middle of his forehead, streamed waving about his face and neck of antique beauty, their warm, transparent colors resembling amber or topaz. Leaning his elbow on a cushion, he supported his chin with the palm of his right hand. The flowing sleeve of his robe, falling back from his arm, which was round as that of a woman, revealed mysterious signs formerly tattooed there in India by a Strangler's needle. The son of Kadja-sing held in his left hand the amber mouth-piece of his pipe. His robe of magnificent cashmere, with a border of a thousand hues, reaching to his knee, was fastened about his slim and well-formed figure by the large folds of an orange-colored shawl. This robe was half withdrawn from one of the elegant legs of this Asiatic Antinoüs, clad in a kind of very close-fitting gaiter of crimson velvet, embroidered with silver, and terminating in a small white morocco slipper with a scarlet heel. At once mild and manly, the countenance of Djalma was expressive of that melancholy and contemplative calmness habitual to the Indian and the Arab, who possess the happy privilege of uniting, by a rare combination, the meditative indolence of the dreamer with the fiery energy of the man of action, now delicate, nervous, impressionable as women, now determined, ferocious, and sanguinary as bandits. And this semi-feminine comparison, applicable to the moral nature of the Arab and the Indian, so long as they are not carried away by the ardor of battle and the excitement of carnage, is almost equally applicable to their physical constitution; for if, like women of good blood, they have small extremities, slender limbs, fine and supple forms, this delicate and often charming exterior always covers muscles of steel, full of an elasticity, and vigor truly masculine.

Djalma's oblong eyes, like black diamonds set in bluish mother-of-pearl, wandered mechanically from the exotic flowers to the ceiling; from time to time he raised the amber mouth-piece of the hookah to his lips; then, after a slow respiration, half opening his rosy lips, strongly contrasted with the shining enamel of his teeth, he sent forth a little spiral line of smoke, freshly scented by the rose-water through which it had passed.

"Shall I put more tobacco in the hookah?" said the kneeling figure, turning toward Djalma, and revealing the marked and sinister features of Faringhea the Strangler.

The young prince remained dumb, either that, from an oriental contempt for certain races, he disdained to answer the half-caste, or that, absorbed in his reverie, he did not even hear him.

The Strangler became again silent; crouching cross-legged upon the carpet, with his elbows resting on his knees and his chin upon his hands, he kept his eyes fixed on Djalma, and seemed to await the reply or the orders of him whose sire had been surnamed the Father of the Generous.

How had Faringhea, the sanguinary worshiper of Bowanee, the Divinity of Murder, been brought to seek or to accept such humble functions? How came this man, possessed of no vulgar talents, whose passionate eloquence and ferocious energy had recruited many assassins for the service of the Good Work, to resign himself to so base a condition? Why, too, had this man who, profiting by the young prince's blindness with regard to himself, might have so easily sacrificed him as an offering to Bowanee—why had he spared the life of Kadja-sing's son? Why, in fine, did he expose himself to such frequent encounters with Rodin, whom he had only known under the most unfavorable auspices?

The sequel of this story will answer all these questions. We can only say at present that, after a long interview with Rodin two nights before, the Strangler had quitted him with downcast eyes and cautious bearing.

After having remained silent for some time, Djalma, following with his eye the cloud of whitish smoke that he had just sent forth into space, addressed Faringhea, without looking at him, and said to him in the language, as hyperbolical as concise, of Orientals:

"Time passes. The old man with the good heart does not come. But he *will* come. His word *is* his word."

"His word *is* his word, my lord," repeated Faringhea, in an affirmative tone. "When he came to fetch you three days ago, from the house whither those wretches, in furtherance of their wicked designs, had conveyed you in a deep sleep,—after throwing me, your watchful and devoted servant, into a similar state,—he said to you: 'The unknown friend who sent for you to Cardoville Castle bids me come to you, prince. Have confidence and follow me. A worthy abode is prepared for you.' And again he said to you, my lord: 'Consent not to leave the house until my return. Your interest requires it. In three days you will see me again, and then be restored to perfect freedom.' You consented to those terms, my lord, and for three days you have not left the house."

"And I wait for the old man with impatience," said Djalma, "for this solitude is heavy with me. There must be so many things to admire in Paris. Above all —"

Djalma did not finish the sentence, but relapsed into a reverie.

After some moments' silence, the son of Kadja-sing said suddenly to Faringhea, in the tone of an impatient yet indolent sultan :

"Speak to me !"

"Of what shall I speak, my lord ?"

"Of what you will," said Djalma, with careless contempt, as he fixed on the ceiling his eyes, half veiled with languor. "One thought pursues me ; I wish to be diverted from it. Speak to me."

Faringhea threw a piercing glance on the countenance of the young Indian, and saw that his cheeks were colored with a slight blush.

"My lord," said the half-caste, "I can guess your thought."

Djalma shook his head, without looking at the Strangler. The latter resumed :

"You are thinking of the women of Paris, my lord."

"Be silent, slave !" said Djalma, turning abruptly on the sofa as if some painful wound had been touched to the quick. Faringhea obeyed.

After the lapse of some moments, Djalma broke forth again with impatience, throwing aside the tube of the hookah, and veiling both eyes with his hands :

"Your words are better than silence. Cursed be my thoughts and the spirit which calls up these phantoms !"

"Why should you fly these thoughts, my lord ? You are nineteen years of age, and hitherto all your youth has been spent in war and captivity. Up to this time you have remained as chaste as Gabriel, that young Christian priest who accompanied us on our voyage."

Though Faringhea did not at all depart from his respectful deference for the prince, the latter felt that there was something of irony in the tone of the half-caste as he pronounced the word "chaste."

Djalma said to him with a mixture of pride and severity :

"I do not wish to pass for a barbarian, as they call us, with these civilized people ; therefore I glory in my chastity."

"I do not understand, my lord."

"I may perhaps love some woman, pure as was my mother when she married my father ; and to ask for purity from a woman, a man must be chaste as she."

At this, Faringhea could not refrain from a sardonic smile.

"Why do you laugh, slave ?" said the young prince imperiously.

"Among civilized people, as you call them, my lord, the man who married in the flower of his innocence would be mortally wounded with ridicule."

"It is false, slave ! He would only be ridiculous if he married one that was not pure as himself."

"Then, my lord, he would not only be wounded, he would be killed outright, for he would be doubly and unmercifully laughed at."

"It is false! it is false! Where did you learn all this?"

"I have seen Parisian women at the Isle of France and at Pondicherry, my lord. Moreover, I learned a good deal during our voyage; I talked with a young officer, while you conversed with the young priest."

"So, like the sultans of our harems, civilized men require of women the innocence they have themselves lost."

"They require it the more, the less they have of it, my lord."

"To require without any return is to act as a master to his slave; by what right?"

"By the right of the strongest—as it is among us, my lord."

"And what do the women do?"

"They prevent the men from being too ridiculous, when they marry, in the eyes of the world."

"But they kill a woman that is false?" said Djalma, raising himself abruptly and fixing upon Faringhea a savage look that sparkled with lurid fire.

"They kill her, my lord, as with us—when they find her out."

"Despots like ourselves! Why, then, do these civilized men not shut up their women, to force them to a fidelity which they do not practice?"

"Because their civilization is barbarous and their barbarism civilized, my lord."

"All this is sad enough, if true," observed Djalma, with a pensive air, adding, with a species of enthusiasm, employing, as usual, the mystic and figurative language familiar to the people of his country: "Yes, your talk afflicts me, slave—for two drops of dew blending in the cup of a flower are as hearts that mingle in a pure and virgin love; and two rays of light united in one inextinguishable flame are as the burning and eternal joys of lovers joined in wedlock."

Djalma spoke of the pure enjoyments of the soul with inexpressible grace, yet it was when he painted less ideal happiness that his eyes shone like stars; he shuddered slightly, his nostrils swelled, the pale gold of his complexion became vermilion, and the young prince sank into a deep reverie.

Faringhea, having remarked this emotion, thus spoke:

"If, like the proud and brilliant kingbird of our woods, you prefer numerous and varied pleasures to solitary and monotonous amours—handsome, young, rich as you are, my lord, were you to seek out the seductive Parisians, voluptuous phantoms of your nights, charming tormentors of your dreams, were you to cast upon them looks bold as a challenge, supplicating as prayers, ardent as desires, do you not think that many a half-veiled eye would borrow fire from your glance? Then it would no longer be the monotonous delights of a single love, the heavy chain of our life; no, it would be the thousand pleasures of the

harem—a harem peopled with free and proud beauties whom happy love would make your slaves. So long constrained, there is no such thing as excess to you. Believe me, it would then be you, the ardent, the magnificent son of our country, that would become the love and pride of these women, the most seductive in the world, who would soon have for you no looks but those of languor and passion.”

Djalma had listened to Faringhea with silent eagerness. The expression of his features had completely changed; it was no longer the melancholy and dreaming youth invoking the sacred remembrance of his mother, and finding only in the dew of heaven, in the calyx of flowers, images sufficiently pure to paint the chastity of the love he dreamed of; it was no longer even the young man, blushing with a modest ardor at the thought of the permitted joys of a legitimate union. No! the incitements of Faringhea had kindled a subterranean fire; the inflamed countenance of Djalma, his eyes now sparkling and now veiled, his manly and sonorous respiration, announced the heat of his blood, the boiling up of the passions, only the more energetic that they had been hitherto restrained.

So, springing suddenly from the divan, supple, vigorous, and light as a young tiger, Djalma clutched Faringhea by the throat, exclaiming:

“Thy words are burning poison!”

“My lord,” said Faringhea, without opposing the least resistance, “your slave is your slave.”

This submission disarmed the prince.

“My life belongs to you,” repeated the half-caste.

“I belong to you, slave!” cried Djalma, repulsing him. “Just now I hung upon your lips, devouring your dangerous lies.”

“Lies, my lord? Only appear before these women, and their looks will confirm my words.”

“These women love me! *me*, who have only lived in war and in the woods?”

“The thought that you, so young, have already waged bloody war on men and tigers will make them adore you, my lord.”

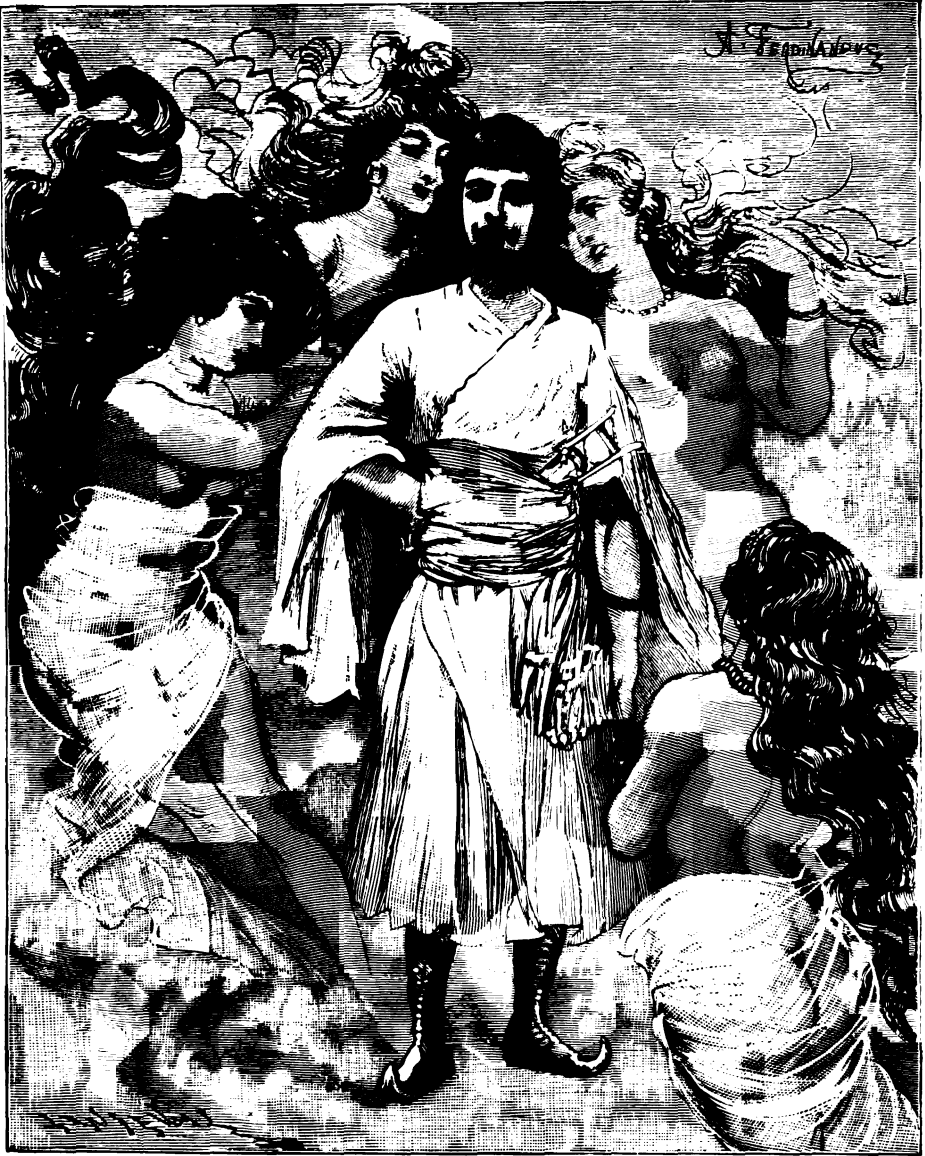
“You lie!”

“I tell you, my lord, on seeing your hand, as delicate as theirs, but which has been so often bathed in hostile blood, they will wish to caress it; and they will kiss it again when they think that in our forests, with loaded rifle, and a poniard between your teeth, you smiled at the roaring of lion or panther, for whom you lay in wait.”

“But I am a savage, a barbarian.”

“And for that very reason you will have them at your feet. They will feel themselves both terrified and charmed by all the violence and

fury, the rage of jealousy, the passion and the love to which a man of your blood, your youth, your ardor must be subject. To-day mild and tender, to-morrow fierce and suspicious; another time ardent and pas-



sionate,—such you will be, and such you ought to be, if you wish to win them. Yes; let a hiss of rage be heard between two kisses; let a dagger glitter in the midst of caresses, and they will fall before you, palpi-

tating with pleasure, love, and fear; and you will be to them, not a man, but a god."

"Dost think so?" cried Djalma, carried away in spite of himself by the Strangler's wild eloquence.

"You know, you feel that I speak the truth," cried the latter, extending his arm toward the young Indian.

"Why, yes!" exclaimed Djalma, his eye sparkling, his nostrils swelling as he moved about the apartment with savage bounds. "I know not if I possess my reason or if I am intoxicated, but it seems to me that you speak truth. Yes, I feel that they will love me with madness and fury, because my love will be mad and furious; they will tremble with pleasure and fear, because the very thought of it makes me tremble with delight and terror. Slave, it is true; there is something exciting and fearful in such a love!"

As he spoke forth these words, Djalma was superb in his impetuous sensuality. It is a rare thing to see a young man arrive in his native purity, at the age in which are developed, in all their powerful energy, those admirable instincts of love which God has implanted in the heart of his creatures, and which, repressed, disguised, or perverted, may unseat the reason or generate mad excesses and frightful crimes; but which, directed toward a great and noble passion, may and must, by their very violence, elevate man, through devotion and tenderness, to the limits of the ideal.

"Oh! this woman—this woman before whom I am to tremble; and who, in turn, must tremble before me—where is she?" cried Djalma, with redoubled excitement. "Shall I ever find her?"

"One is a good deal, my lord!" replied Faringhea, with his sardonic coolness; "he who looks for one woman will rarely succeed in this country; he who seeks women is only at a loss to choose."

As the half-caste made this impertinent answer to Djalma, a very elegant blue-and-white carriage stopped before the garden gate of the house, which opened upon a deserted street. It was drawn by a pair of beautiful blood-horses of a cream color, with black manes and tails. The scutcheons on the harness were of silver, as were also the buttons of the servants' livery, which was blue with white collars. On the blue hammer-cloth, also laced with white, as well as on the panels of the doors, were lozenge-shaped coats of arms, without crest or coronet, as usually borne by unmarried daughters of noble families.

Two women were in this carriage, Mademoiselle de Cardoville and Florine.

CHAPTER VI

THE AWAKING

TO explain the arrival of Mademoiselle de Cardoville at the garden-door of the house occupied by Djalma, we must cast a retrospective glance at previous events.

On leaving Doctor Baleinier's, Mademoiselle de Cardoville had gone to take up her residence in the Rue d'Anjou. During the last few months of her stay with her aunt, Adrienne had secretly caused this handsome dwelling to be repaired and furnished, and its luxury and elegance were now increased by all the wonders of the lodge of the Hotel Saint-Dizier.

The world found it very strange that a lady of the age and condition of Mademoiselle de Cardoville should take the resolution of living completely alone and free, and, in fact, of keeping house exactly like a bachelor, a young widow, or an emancipated minor. The world pretended not to know that Mademoiselle de Cardoville possessed what is often wanting in men, whether of age or twice of age — a firm character, a lofty mind, a generous heart, strong and vigorous good sense.

Judging that she would require faithful assistance in the internal management of her house, Adrienne had written to the bailiff of Cardoville and his wife, old family servants, to come immediately to Paris: M. Dupont thus filled the office of steward, and Madame Dupont that of housekeeper. An old friend of Adrienne's father, the Count de Montbron, an accomplished old man, once very much in fashion, and still a connoisseur in all sorts of elegances, had advised Adrienne to act like a princess, and take an equerry; recommended for this office a man of good rearing and ripe age, who, himself an amateur in horses, had been ruined in England, at Newmarket, the Derby, and Tattersall's, and reduced, as sometimes happened to gentlemen in that country, to drive the stage-coaches, thus finding an honest method of earning his bread and at the same time gratifying his taste for horses. Such was M. de Bonneville, M. de Montbron's choice. Both from age and habits, this

equerry could accompany Mademoiselle de Cardoville on horseback, and, better than any one else, superintend the stable. He accepted, therefore, the employment with gratitude, and, thanks to his skill and attention, the equipages of Mademoiselle de Cardoville were not eclipsed in style by anything of the kind in Paris.

Mademoiselle de Cardoville had taken back her women, Hebe, Georgette, and Florine. The latter was at first to have reëntered the service of the Princess de Saint-Dizier, to continue her part of spy for the superior of St. Mary's Convent; but, in consequence of the new direction given by Rodin to the Rennepont affair, it was decided that Florine, if possible, should return to the service of Mademoiselle de Cardoville. This confidential place, enabling this unfortunate creature to render important and mysterious services to the people who held her fate in their hands, forced her to infamous treachery. Unfortunately, all things favored this machination. We know that Florine, in her interview with Mother Bunch, a few days after Mademoiselle de Cardoville was imprisoned at Dr. Baleinier's, had yielded to a twinge of remorse, and given to the seamstress advice likely to be of use to Adrienne's interests — sending word to Agricola not to deliver to Madame de Saint-Dizier the papers found in the hiding-place of the pavilion, but only to intrust them to Mademoiselle de Cardoville herself. The latter, afterward informed of these details by Mother Bunch, felt a double degree of confidence and interest in Florine, took her back into her service with gratitude, and almost immediately charged her with a confidential mission — that of superintending the arrangements of the house hired for Djalma's habitation.

As for Mother Bunch, yielding to the solicitations of Mademoiselle de Cardoville, and finding she was no longer of use to Dagobert's wife, of whom we shall speak hereafter, she had consented to take up her abode in the hotel on the Rue d'Anjou, along with Adrienne, who, with that rare sagacity of the heart peculiar to her, intrusted the young seamstress, who served her also as a secretary, with the department of almsgiving.

Mademoiselle de Cardoville had at first thought of entertaining her merely as a friend, wishing to pay homage in her person to probity with labor, resignation in sorrow, and intelligence in poverty; but, knowing the workgirl's natural dignity, she feared, with reason, that, notwithstanding the delicate circumspection with which the hospitality would be offered, Mother Bunch might perceive in it alms in disguise. Adrienne preferred, therefore, while she treated her as a friend, to give her a confidential employment. In this manner the great delicacy of the needlewoman would be spared, since she could earn her livelihood by perform-

ing duties which would at the same time satisfy her praiseworthy instincts of charity. In fact, she could fulfill, better than any one, the sacred mission confided to her by Adrienne. Her cruel experience in misfortune, the goodness of her angelic soul, the elevation of her mind, her rare activity, her penetration with regard to the painful secrets of poverty, her perfect knowledge of the industrial classes, were sufficient security for the tact and intelligence with which the excellent creature would second the generous intentions of Mademoiselle de Cardoville.

Let us now speak of the divers events which on that day preceded the coming of Mademoiselle de Cardoville to the garden-gate of the house in the Rue Blanche.

About ten o'clock in the morning, the blinds of Adrienne's bed-chamber, closely shut, admitted no ray to this apartment, which was only lighted by a spherical lamp of oriental alabaster suspended from the ceiling by three long silver chains. This apartment, terminating in a dome, was in the form of a tent with eight sides. From the ceiling to the floor it was hung with white silk, covered with long draperies of muslin, fastened in large puffs to the wall by bands caught in at regular distances by plates of ivory. Two doors, also of ivory, admirably incrustated with mother-of-pearl, led, one to the bath-room, the other to the toilet-chamber—a sort of little temple dedicated to the worship of beauty, and furnished as it had been at the pavilion of the Hotel Saint-Dizier. Two other compartments of the wall were occupied by windows completely veiled with drapery. Opposite the bed, inclosing splendid fire-dogs of chased silver, was a chimney-piece of white marble like crystallized snow, on which were sculptured two magnificent caryatides and a frieze representing birds and flowers. Above this frieze, carved in open-work with extreme delicacy, was a marble basket, filled with red camellias. Their leaves of shining green, their flowers of a delicate rosy hue, were the only colors that disturbed the harmonious whiteness of this virgin retreat. Finally, half surrounded by waves of white muslin which poured down from the dome like a mass of light clouds, the bed was visible—very low, and resting on feet of carved ivory, which stood upon the ermine carpet that covered the floor. With the exception of a plinth, also in ivory, admirably inlaid with mother-of-pearl, the bed was entirely covered with white satin wadded and quilted like an immense scent-bag. The cambric sheets trimmed with lace, being a little disturbed on one side, discovered the corner of a white taffeta mattress and a light counterpane of watered stuff—for an equal temperature always reigned in this apartment, warm as a fine spring day.

From a singular scruple, arising from the same sentiment which had

caused Adrienne to have inscribed on a master-piece of goldsmith's work the name of the maker instead of that of the seller, she had wished all these articles, so costly and sumptuous, to be manufactured by workmen chosen amongst the most intelligent, honest, and industrious of their class, whom she had supplied with the necessary materials. In this manner she had been able to add to the price of the work the profit usually gained by the middle-man who speculates in such labor; this notable augmentation of wages had spread happiness and comfort through a hundred necessitous families, who, blessing the munificence of Adrienne, gave her, as she said, the right *to enjoy her luxury as a good action*. Nothing could be fresher or more charming than the interior of this bed-chamber.

Mademoiselle de Cardoville had just awoke; she reposed in the middle of this flood of muslin, lace, cambric, and white silk, in a position full of sweet grace. Never during the night did she cover that beautiful golden hair (a certain method, said the Greeks, for preserving it for a long while in magnificence). Every evening her women arranged her long silky curls in flat tresses, forming two broad bands, which, descending sufficiently low almost entirely to conceal the small ear, the rosy lobe of which was alone visible, were joined to the large plait behind the head.

This head-dress, borrowed from Greek antiquity, set off to admiration the pure, fine features of Mademoiselle de Cardoville, and made her look so much younger, that, instead of eighteen, one would hardly have given her fifteen years of age. Gathered thus closely about the temples, the hair lost its transparent and brilliant hues, and would have appeared almost brown, but for the golden tints which played here and there amid the undulations of the tresses. Lulled in that morning torpor, the warm languor of which is so favorable to soft reveries, Adrienne leaned with her elbow on the pillow, and her head a little on one side, which displayed to advantage the ideal contour of her bared neck and shoulders; her smiling lips, moist and rosy, were, like her cheeks, cold as if they had just been bathed in ice-water; her snow-white lids half veiled the large, dark, soft eyes, which now gazed languidly upon vacancy, and now fixed themselves with pleasure upon the rosy flowers and green leaves in the basket of camellias.

Who can paint the matchless serenity of Adrienne's awaking—when the fair and chaste soul roused itself in the fair and chaste body? It was the awaking of a heart as pure as the fresh and balmy breath of youth, that made her bosom rise and fall in its white, immaculate purity. What creed, what dogma, what formula, what religious symbol, oh, paternal and divine Creator! can ever give a more complete idea of thy

harmonious and ineffable power than the image of a young maiden awaking in the bloom of her beauty, and in all the grace of that modesty with which thou hast endowed her, seeking, in her dreamy innocence, for the secret of that celestial instinct of love which thou hast placed in the bosom of all thy creatures—oh, thou whose love is eternal and goodness infinite!

The confused thoughts which, since her sleep, had appeared gently to agitate Adrienne, absorbed her more and more; her head resting on her bosom, her beautiful arm upon the couch, her features, without becoming precisely sad, assumed an expression of touching melancholy. Her dearest desire was accomplished: she was about to live independent and alone. But this affectionate, delicate, expansive, and marvelously complete nature felt that God had not given her such rare treasures to bury them in a cold and selfish solitude. She felt how much that was great and beautiful might be inspired by love, both in herself and in him that should be worthy of her. Confiding in her courage and the nobleness of her character, proud of the example that she wished to give to other women, knowing that all eyes would be fixed enviously upon her, she felt, as it were, only too sure of herself; far from fearing that she should make a bad choice, she rather feared that she should not find any from whom to choose, so pure and perfect was her taste. And, even had she met with her own ideal, she had views so singular and so just, so extraordinary and yet so sensible, with regard to the independence and dignity of woman, that, inexorably determined to make no concession upon this head, she asked herself if the man of her choice would ever accept the hitherto unheard-of conditions that she meant to impose. In recalling to her remembrance the possible suitors that she had met in the world, she remembered also the dark but true picture which Rodin had drawn with so much caustic bitterness. She remembered too, not without a certain pride, the encouragement this man had given her, not by flattery, but by advising her to follow out and accomplish a great, generous, and beautiful design.

The current or the caprice of fancy soon brought Adrienne to think of Djalma. While she congratulated herself on having paid to her royal kinsman the duties of a kingly hospitality, the young lady was far from regarding the prince as the hero of her future.

And first she said to herself, not unreasonably, that this half-savage boy, with passions, if not untamable, yet untamed, transported on a sudden into the midst of a refined civilization, would be inevitably destined to fiery trials and violent transformations. Now, Mademoiselle de Cardoville, having nothing masculine or despotic in her character, had no wish to civilize the young savage. Therefore, notwithstanding

the interest, or, rather, because of the interest, which she felt for the young Indian, she was firmly resolved not to make herself known to him till after the lapse of two or three months; and she determined, also, that even if Djalma should learn by chance that she was his relation, she would not receive his visit. She desired, if not to try him, at least to leave him free in all his acts, so that he might expend the first fire of his passions, good or bad. But not wishing to abandon him quite without defense to the perils of a Parisian life, she requested the Count de Montbron, in confidence, to introduce Prince Djalma to the best company in Paris, and to enlighten him by the counsels of his long experience.

M. de Montbron had received the request of Mademoiselle de Cardoville with the greatest pleasure, taking delight, he said, in starting his royal tiger in drawing-rooms, and bringing him into contact with the flower of the fine ladies and gentlemen of Paris, offering, at the same time, to wager any amount in favor of his half-savage pupil.

"As for myself, my dear count," said Adrienne to M. de Montbron, with her usual frankness, "my resolution is not to be shaken. You have told me the effect that will be produced in the fashionable world by the first appearance of Prince Djalma, an Indian nineteen years of age, of surprising beauty, proud and wild as a young lion arriving from his forest. It is new, it is extraordinary, you added; and, therefore, all the coquetries of civilized life will pursue him with an eagerness which makes me tremble for him. Now, seriously, my dear count, it will not suit me to appear as the rival of so many fine ladies, who are about to expose themselves intrepidly to the claws of the young tiger. I take great interest in him, because he is my cousin, because he is handsome, because he is brave, and, above all, because he does not wear that horrible European dress. No doubt these are rare qualities, but not sufficient to make me change my mind. Besides, the good old philosopher, my new friend, has given me advice about this Indian which you, my dear count, who are not a philosopher, will yet approve. It is, for some time, to receive visits at home, but not to visit other people; which will spare me the awkwardness of meeting my royal cousin, and allow me to make a careful choice, even amongst my usual society. As my house will be an excellent one, my position most unusual, and as I shall be suspected of all sorts of naughty secrets, I shall be in no want of inquisitive visitors who will amuse me a good deal, I assure you."

And as M. de Montbron asked if the *exile* of the poor young Indian tiger was to last long, Adrienne answered:

"As I shall see most of the persons to whom you will introduce him, I shall be pleased to hear different opinions about him. If certain men

speak well of him, and certain women ill, I shall have good hope of him. In a word, the opinion that I come to, in sifting the true from



the false,—you may leave that to my sagacity,—will shorten or prolong the *exile* of my royal cousin.”

Such were the formal intentions of Mademoiselle de Cardoville with regard to Djalma, even on the day she went with Florine to the house

he occupied. In a word, she had positively resolved not to be known to him for some months to come.

.

After long reflecting that morning on the chances that might yet offer themselves to satisfy the wants of her heart, Adrienne fell into a new, deep reverie. This charming creature, so full of life and youth, heaved a low sigh, raised her arms above her head, turned her profile toward the pillow, and remained for some moments as if powerless and vanquished. Motionless beneath the white tissues that wrapped her round, she looked like a fair, marble statue visible beneath a light layer of snow. Suddenly Adrienne raised herself up, drew her hand across her brow, and rang for her women. At the first silver tone of the bell the two ivory doors opened. Georgette appeared on the threshold of the dressing-room, from which *Frisky*, a little black-and-tan dog, with his golden collar, escaped with a joyful barking. Hebe appeared at the same time on the threshold of the bath-room.

At the farther end of this apartment, lighted from above, might be seen upon a green mat of Cordovan leather with golden ornaments a crystal bath in the form of a long shell. The three only divisions in this master-piece of glass-work were concealed by the elegant device of several large reeds in silver, which rose from the wide basin of the bath, also of wrought silver, representing children and dolphins playing among branches of natural coral and azure shells. Nothing could be more pleasing than the effect of these purple reeds and ultramarine shells upon a dull ground of silver; the balsamic vapor which rose from the warm, limpid, and perfumed water that filled the crystal shell spread through the bath-room and floated like a light cloud into the sleeping-chamber.

Seeing Hebe in her fresh and pretty costume, bringing her a long bathing-gown hanging upon a bare and dimpled arm, Adrienne said to her:

“Where is Florine, my child?”

“Madame, she went downstairs two hours ago; she was wanted for something very pressing.”

“Who wanted her?”

“The young person who serves mademoiselle as secretary. She went out this morning very early; and as soon as she returned she sent for Florine, who has not come back since.”

“This absence no doubt relates to some important affair of my angelic minister of succor,” said Adrienne, smiling and thinking of the hunch-back.

Then she made a sign to Hebe to approach her bed.

.

About two hours after rising, Adrienne, having had herself dressed as usual with rare elegance, dismissed her women and sent for Mother Bunch, whom she treated with marked deference, always receiving her alone.

The young seamstress entered hastily, with a pale, agitated countenance, and said, in a trembling voice :

“ Oh, mademoiselle ! my presentiments were justified. You are betrayed.”

“ Of what presentiments do you speak, my dear child ? ” said Adrienne, with surprise. “ Who betrays me ? ”

“ M. Rodin ! ” answered the workgirl.

CHAPTER VII

DOUBTS



ON hearing the accusation brought against Rodin, Mademoiselle de Cardoville looked at the denunciator with new astonishment.

Before continuing this scene, we may say that Mother Bunch was no longer clad in her poor, old clothes, but was dressed in black, with as much simplicity as taste. The sad color seemed to indicate her renunciation of all human vanity, the eternal mourning of her heart, and the austere duties imposed upon her by her devotion to misfortune. With her black gown she wore a large falling collar, white and neat as her little gauze cap with its gray ribbons, which, revealing her bands of fine brown hair, set off to advantage her pale and melancholy countenance, with its soft blue eyes. Her long, delicate hands, preserved from the cold by gloves, were no longer, as formerly, of a violet hue, but of an almost transparent whiteness.

Her agitated features expressed a lively uneasiness. Extremely surprised, Mademoiselle de Cardoville exclaimed:

“What do you say?”

“M. Rodin betrays you, mademoiselle.”

“M. Rodin? Impossible!”

“Oh, mademoiselle! my presentiments did not deceive me.”

“Your presentiments?”

“The first time I saw M. Rodin I was frightened, in spite of myself. My heart sank within me and I trembled—for you, mademoiselle.”

“For me?” said Adrienne. “Why did you not tremble for yourself, my poor friend?”

“I do not know, mademoiselle, but such was my first impression. And this fear was so invincible that, notwithstanding the kindness that M. Rodin showed my sister, he frightened me, none the less.”

“That is strange. I can understand as well as any one the almost

irresistible influence of sympathies or aversions; but, in this instance — However,” resumed Adrienne, after a moment’s reflection, “no matter for that; how have these suspicions been changed to certainty?”

“Yesterday I went to take to my sister Cephyse the assistance that M. Rodin had given me, in the name of a charitable person. I did not find Cephyse at the friend’s who had taken care of her; I therefore begged the portress to inform my sister that I would call again this morning. That is what I did; but you must excuse me, mademoiselle, some necessary details.”

“Speak, speak, my dear.”

“The young girl who had received my sister,” said Mother Bunch, with embarrassment, casting down her eyes and blushing, “does not lead a very regular life. A person with whom she has gone on several parties of pleasure, one M. Dumoulin, had informed her of the real name of M. Rodin, who has a kind of lodging in that house, and there goes by the name of Charlemagne.”

“That is just what he told us at Dr. Baleinier’s; and the day before yesterday, when I again alluded to the circumstance, he explained to me the necessity in which he was, for certain reasons, to have a humble retreat in that remote quarter—and I could not but approve of his motives.”

“Well, then! yesterday M. Rodin received a visit from the Abbé d’Aigrigny ”

“The Abbé d’Aigrigny!” exclaimed Mademoiselle de Cardoville.

“Yes, mademoiselle; he remained for two hours shut up with M. Rodin.”

“My child, you must have been deceived.”

“I was told, mademoiselle, that the Abbé d’Aigrigny had called in the morning to see M. Rodin; not finding him at home, he had left with the portress his name written on a slip of paper, with the words, ‘*I shall return in two hours.*’ The girl of whom I spoke had seen this slip of paper. As all that concerns M. Rodin appears mysterious enough, she had the curiosity to wait for M. d’Aigrigny in the porter’s lodge, and, about two hours afterward he indeed returned and saw M. Rodin.”

“No, no,” said Adrienne, shuddering; “it is impossible. There must be some mistake.”

“I think not, mademoiselle; for, knowing how serious such a discovery would be, I begged the young girl to describe to me the appearance of M. d’Aigrigny ”

“Well?”

“The Abbé d’Aigrigny, she told me, is about forty years of age. He is tall and upright, dresses plainly, but with care; has gray eyes, very

large and piercing, thick eyebrows, chestnut-colored hair, a face closely shaved, and a very decided aspect."

"It is true," said Adrienne, hardly able to believe what she heard. "The description is exact."

"Wishing to have all possible details," resumed Mother Bunch, "I asked the portress if M. Rodin and the Abbé d'Aigrigny appeared to be at variance when they quitted the house? She replied no, but that the abbé said to M. Rodin, as they parted at the door: 'I will write to you to-morrow, as agreed.'"

"Is it a dream? Good Heaven!" said Adrienne, drawing her hands across her forehead in a sort of stupor. "I cannot doubt your word, my poor friend; and yet it is M. Rodin who himself sent you to that house, to give assistance to your sister: would he have willfully laid open to you his secret interviews with the Abbé d'Aigrigny? It would have been bad policy in a traitor."

"That is true, and the same reflection occurred to me. And yet the meeting of these two men appeared so dangerous to you, madame, that I returned home full of terror."

Characters of extreme honesty are very hard to convince of the treachery of others: the more infamous the deception, the more they are inclined to doubt it. Adrienne was one of these characters, rectitude being a prime quality of her mind. Though deeply impressed by the communication, she remarked:

"Come, my dear, do not let us frighten ourselves too soon, or be over-hasty in believing evil. Let us try to enlighten ourselves by reasoning, and first of all remember facts. M. Rodin opened for me the doors of Dr Baleinier's asylum; in my presence, he brought his charge against the Abbé d'Aigrigny; he forced the superior of the convent to restore Marshal Simon's daughters, he succeeded in discovering the retreat of Prince Djalma; he faithfully executed my intentions with regard to my young cousin; only yesterday he gave me the most useful advice. All this is true, is it not?"

"Certainly, mademoiselle."

"Now, suppose that M. Rodin, putting things in their worst light, had some after-thought, that he hopes to be liberally rewarded, for instance; hitherto, at least, he has shown complete disinterestedness."

"That also is true," said poor Mother Bunch, obliged, like Adrienne, to admit the evidence of fixed facts.

"Now, let us look at the possibility of treachery. Unite with the Abbé d'Aigrigny to betray me! Betray *me*?—how? and for what purpose? What have I to fear? Is it not the Abbé d'Aigrigny, on the contrary, is it not Madame de Saint-Dizier, who have to render an account for the injuries they have done me?"

"But, then, mademoiselle, how do you explain the meeting of these two men, who have so many motives for mutual aversion? May there not be some dark project still behind? Besides, I am not the only one to think so."

"How is that?"

"This morning, on my return, I was so much agitated, that Mademoiselle Florine asked me the cause of my trouble. I know, mademoiselle, how much she is devoted to you."

"Nobody could be more so; only recently you yourself informed me of the signal service she rendered, during my confinement at Dr. Baleinier's."

"Well, mademoiselle, this morning, on my return, thinking it necessary to have you informed as soon as possible, I told all to Mademoiselle Florine. Like me,—even more, perhaps,—she was terrified at the meeting of Rodin and M. d'Aigrigny. After a moment's reflection, she said to me: 'It is, I think, useless to disturb my mistress at present; it can be of no importance whether she is informed of this treachery two or three hours sooner or later; during that time I may be able to discover something more. I have an idea, which I think a good one. Make my excuses to my mistress; I shall soon be back.' Then Florine sent for a hackney-coach and went out."

"Florine is an excellent girl," said Mademoiselle de Cardoville, with a smile, for further reflection had quite re-assured her; "but, on this occasion, I think that her zeal and good heart have deceived her, as they have you, my poor friend. Do you know that we are two madcaps, you and I, not to have thought of one thing, which would have put us quite at our ease?"

"How so, mademoiselle?"

"The Abbé d'Aigrigny fears M. Rodin; he may have sought him out, to entreat his forbearance. Do you not find this explanation both satisfactory and reasonable?"

"Perhaps so, mademoiselle," said Mother Bunch, after a moment's reflection; "yes, it is probable."

But after another silence, and as if yielding to a conviction superior to every possible argument, she exclaimed:

"And yet, no; believe me, mademoiselle, you are deceived. I feel it. All appearances may be against what I affirm; yet, believe me, these presentiments are too strong not to be true. And have you not guessed the most secret instincts of my heart? why should I not be able to guess the dangers with which you are menaced?"

"What do you say? what have I guessed?" replied Mademoiselle de Cardoville, involuntarily impressed by the other's tone of conviction and alarm.

“What have you guessed?” resumed the latter. “All the troublesome susceptibility of an unfortunate creature, to whom destiny has decreed a life apart. If I have hitherto been silent, it is not from ignorance of what I owe you. Who told you, mademoiselle, that the only way to make me accept your favors without blushing was to give me some employment, that would enable me to soothe the misfortunes I had so long shared? Who told you, when you wished me to have a seat at your table, and to treat as your friend the poor needle-woman, in whose person you sought to honor resignation and honest industry—who told you, when I answered with tears of gratitude and regret, that it was not false modesty, but a consciousness of my own ridiculous deformity, that made me refuse your offer? Who told you that, but for this, I should have accepted it proudly, in the name of all my low-born sisters? But you replied to me with the touching words: ‘I understand your refusal, my friend; it is not occasioned by false modesty, but by a sentiment of dignity that I love and respect.’ Who told you,” continued the workgirl, with increasing animation, “that I should be so happy to find a little solitary retreat in this magnificent house, which dazzles me with its splendor? Who guided you in the choice of the apartment—still far too good—that you have provided for me? Who taught you that, without envying the beauty of the charming creatures that surround you, and whom I love because they love you, I should always feel, by an involuntary comparison, embarrassed and ashamed before them? Who told you, therefore, to send them away, whenever you wished to speak with me? Yes! who has revealed to you all the painful and secret susceptibilities of a position like mine! Who has revealed them to you? God, no doubt! who in his infinite majesty creates worlds, and yet cares for the poor little insect hidden beneath the grass. And you think that the gratitude of a heart you have understood so well cannot rise in its turn to the knowledge of what may be hurtful to you? No, no; some people have the instinct of self-preservation; others have the still more precious instinct that enables them to preserve those they love. God has given me this instinct. I tell you that you *are* betrayed!”

And with animated look and cheeks slightly colored with emotion, the speaker laid such stress upon the last words, and accompanied them with such energetic gesture, that Mademoiselle de Cardoville, already shaken by the girl’s warmth, began almost to share in her apprehensions. Then, although she had before learned to appreciate the superior intelligence of this poor child of the people, Mademoiselle de Cardoville had never till now heard her friend express herself with so much eloquence—an eloquence, too, that was inspired by the noblest

sentiments. This circumstance added to the impression made upon Adrienne. But at the moment she was about to answer, a knock was heard at the door of the room, and Florine entered.



On seeing the alarmed countenance of her waiting-maid, Mademoiselle de Cardoville said hastily :

“ Well, Florine ! what news ? Whence come you, my child ? ”

“ From the Hotel Saint-Dizier, mademoiselle ”

"And why did you go there?" asked Mademoiselle de Cardoville, with surprise.

"This morning," said Florine, glancing at the workgirl, "mademoiselle, there, confided to me her suspicions and uneasiness. I shared in them. The visit of the Abbé d'Aigrigny to M. Rodin appeared to me very serious. I thought, if it should turn out that M. Rodin had been during the last few days to the Hotel Saint-Dizier, there would be no longer any doubt of his treachery"

"True," said Adrienne, more and more uneasy. "Well?"

"As I had been charged to superintend the removal from the lodge, I knew that several things had remained there. To obtain admittance, I had to apply to Madame Grivois. I had thus a pretext for returning to the hotel."

"What next, Florine, what next?"

"I endeavored to get Madame Grivois to talk of M. Rodin, but it was in vain."

"She suspected you," said the workgirl. "It was to be anticipated."

"I asked her," continued Florine, "if they had seen M. Rodin at the hotel lately. She answered evasively. Then, despairing of getting anything out of her," continued Florine, "I left Madame Grivois; and, that my visit might excite no suspicion, I went to the pavilion, when, as I turned down the avenue, whom do I see? Why, M. Rodin himself, hastening toward the little garden-door, wishing, no doubt, to depart unnoticed by that way."

"Mademoiselle, you hear," cried Mother Bunch, clasping her hands with a supplicating air; "such evidence should convince you."

"M. Rodin at the Princess de Saint-Dizier's!" cried Mademoiselle de Cardoville, whose glance, generally so mild, now suddenly flashed with vehement indignation. Then she added, in a tone of considerable emotion, "Continue, Florine."

"At sight of M. Rodin I stopped," proceeded Florine, "and keeping a little on one side, I gained the pavilion without being seen. I looked out into the street through the closed blinds, and perceived a hackney-coach. It was waiting for M. Rodin, for, a minute after, he got into it, saying to the coachman, 'No. 39 Rue Blanche' —"

"The prince's!" exclaimed Mademoiselle de Cardoville.

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"Yes, M. Rodin was to see him to-day," said Adrienne, reflecting.

"No doubt he betrays you and the prince; also; the latter will be made his victim more easily than you."

"Shame! shame!" cried Mademoiselle de Cardoville on a sudden, as she rose, all her features contracted with painful anger. "After such a

piece of treachery, it is enough to make us doubt of everything—even of ourselves.”

“Oh, mademoiselle! is it not dreadful?” said Mother Bunch, shuddering.

“But, then, why did he rescue me and mine, and accuse the Abbé d’Aigrigny?” wondered Mademoiselle de Cardoville. “Of a truth it is enough to make one lose one’s reason. It is an abyss; but, oh! how frightful is doubt!”

“As I returned,” said Florine, casting a look of affectionate devotion on her mistress, “I thought of a way to make all clear; but there is not a minute to lose.”

“What do you mean?” said Adrienne, looking at Florine with surprise.

“M. Rodin will soon be alone with the prince,” said Florine.

“No doubt,” replied Adrienne.

“The prince always sits in a little room that opens upon a greenhouse. It is there that he will receive M. Rodin.”

“What then?” resumed Adrienne.

“This greenhouse, which I had arranged according to your orders, has only one issue—by a door leading into a little lane. The gardener gets in that way every morning, so as not to have to pass through the apartments. Having finished his work, he does not return thither during the day.”

“What do you mean? What is your project?” said Adrienne, looking at Florine with growing surprise.

“The plants are so disposed that I think, if even the shade were not there which screens the glass that separates the saloon from the greenhouse, one might get near enough to hear what was passing in the room without being seen. When I was superintending the arrangements, I always entered by this greenhouse door. The gardener had one key and I another. Luckily, I have not yet parted with mine. Within an hour you may know how far to trust M. Rodin. If he betrays the prince, he betrays you also.”

“What say you?” cried Mademoiselle de Cardoville.

“Set out instantly with me; we reach the side-door; I enter alone, for precaution’s sake; if all is right, I return —”

“You would have *me* turn spy?” said Mademoiselle de Cardoville haughtily, interrupting Florine. “You cannot think it.”

“I beg your pardon, mademoiselle,” said the girl, casting down her eyes with a confused and sorrowful air; “you had suspicions, and meseems ’tis the only way to confirm or to destroy them.”

“Stoop to listen to a conversation; never!” replied Adrienne.

"Mademoiselle," said Mother Bunch suddenly, after some moments' thought, "permit me to tell you that Mademoiselle Florine is right. The plan proposed is a painful one, but it is the only way in which you can clear up, perhaps forever, your doubts as to M. Rodin. Notwithstanding the evidence of facts, in spite of the almost certainty of my presentiments, appearances may deceive us. I was the first who accused M. Rodin to you. I should not forgive myself all the rest of my life did I accuse him wrongfully. Beyond doubt, it is painful, as you say, madame, to listen to a conversation ——"

Then, with a violent effort to console herself, she added, as she strove to repress her tears :

"Yet, as your safety is at stake, mademoiselle,—for, if this be treachery, the future prospect is dreadful,—I will go in your place—to ——"

"Not a word more, I entreat you," cried Mademoiselle de Cardoville, interrupting. "Let you, my poor friend, do for me what I thought degrading to do myself? Never!"

Then, turning to Florine, she added :

"Tell M. de Bonneville to have the carriage got ready on the instant."

"You consent, then!" cried Florine, clasping her hands, and not seeking to conceal her joy; and her eyes also became full of tears.

"Yes, I consent," answered Adrienne, with emotion. "If it is to be war, a war to the knife that they would wage with me, I must be prepared for it; and, come to think of it, it would only be weakness and folly not to put myself on my guard. No doubt this step costs me much and is very repugnant to me, but it is the only way to put an end to suspicions that would be a continual torment to me, and perhaps to prevent still greater evils. Yes! for many important reasons, this interview of M. Rodin with Prince Djalma may be doubly decisive with me—as to the confidence or the inexorable hate that I must henceforth feel for M. Rodin. So, Florine, quick! my cloak and bonnet, and the carriage. You will go with me. As for you, my dear, pray wait for me here," she added, turning to the workgirl.

Half an hour after this conversation, Adrienne's carriage stopped, as we have before seen, at the little garden-gate of the house in the Rue Blanche.

Florine entered the greenhouse, and soon returned to her mistress.

"The shade is down, madame. M. Rodin has just entered the prince's room."

Mademoiselle de Cardoville was, therefore, present, though invisible, at the following scene, which took place between Rodin and Djalma.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LETTER



OME minutes before the entrance of Mademoiselle de Cardoville into the greenhouse, Rodin had been introduced by Faringhea into the presence of the prince, who, still under the influence of the burning excitement into which he had been plunged by the words of the half-caste, did not appear to perceive the Jesuit.

The latter, surprised at the animated expression of Djalma's countenance and his almost frantic air, made a sign of interrogation to Faringhea, who answered him privately in the following symbolical manner: After laying his forefinger on his head and heart, he pointed to the fire burning in the chimney, signifying by his pantomimic action that the head and heart of Djalma were both in flames. No doubt Rodin understood him, for an imperceptible smile of satisfaction played upon his wan lips; then he said aloud to Faringhea:

"I wish to be alone with the prince. Let down the shade, and see that we are not interrupted."

The half-caste bowed, and touched a spring near the sheet of plate-glass, which slid into the wall as the blind descended; then, again bowing, Faringhea left the room. It was shortly after that Mademoiselle de Cardoville and Florine entered the greenhouse, which was now only separated from the room in which was Djalma, by the transparent thickness of a shade of white silk, embroidered with large colored birds.

The noise of the door, which Faringhea closed as he went out, seemed to recall the young Indian to himself; his features, though still animated, recovered their habitual expression of mildness and gentleness; he started, drew his hand across his brow, looked round him, as if waking up from a deep reverie, and then advancing toward Rodin, with an air as respectful as confused, he said to him, using the expression commonly applied to old men in his country:

"Pardon me, father."

Still following the customs of his nation, so full of deference toward age, he took Rodin's hand to raise to his lips, but the Jesuit drew back a step and refused this homage.

"For what do you ask pardon, my dear prince?" said he to Djalma.

"When you entered, I was in a dream; I did not come to meet you. Once more, pardon me, father!"

"Once more, I forgive you with all my heart, my dear prince. But let us have some talk. Pray resume your place on the couch, and your pipe, too, if you like it."

But Djalma, instead of adopting the suggestion, and throwing himself on the divan, according to his custom, insisted on seating himself in a chair, notwithstanding all the persuasion of "*the Old Man with the Good Heart*," as he always called the Jesuit.

"Really, your politeness troubles me, my dear prince," said Rodin; "you are here at home in India; at least, we wish you to think so."

"Many things remind me of my country," said Djalma, in a mild, grave tone. "Your goodness reminds me of my father, and of him who was a father to me," added the Indian, as he thought of Marshal Simon, whose arrival in Paris had been purposely concealed from him.

After a moment's silence, he resumed in a tone full of affectionate warmth, as he stretched out his hand to Rodin:

"You are come, and I am happy."

"I understand your joy, my dear prince, for I come to take you out of prison; to open your cage for you. I have begged you to submit to a brief seclusion entirely for your own interest."

"Can I go out to-morrow?"

"To-day, my dear prince, if you please."

The young Indian reflected for a moment, and then resumed:

"I must have friends, since I am here in a palace that does not belong to me."

"Certainly you have friends — excellent friends," answered Rodin.

At these words, Djalma's countenance seemed to acquire fresh beauty. The most noble sentiments were expressed in his fine features; his large black eyes became slightly humid, and after another interval of silence he rose and said to Rodin with emotion:

"Come!"

"Whither, dear prince?" said the other, much surprised.

"To thank my friends. I have waited three days. It is long."

"Permit me, dear prince; I have much to tell you on this subject; please to be seated."

Djalma resumed his seat with docility. Rodin continued:

"It is true that you have friends; or rather, you have a friend. Friends are rare."

"What are you?"

"Well, then, you have two friends, my dear prince: myself, whom you know, and one other, whom you do not know, and who desires to remain unknown to you."

"Why?"

"Why?" answered Rodin, after a moment's embarrassment. "Because the happiness he feels in giving you these proofs of his friendship, and even his own tranquillity, depend upon preserving this mystery."

"Why should there be concealment when we do good?"

"Sometimes to conceal the good we do, my dear prince."

"I profit by his friendship; why should he conceal himself from me?"

These repeated questions of the young Indian appeared to puzzle Rodin, who, however, replied:

"I have told you, my dear prince, that your secret friend would perhaps have his tranquillity compromised if he were known."

"If he were known—as my friend?"

"Exactly so, dear prince."

The countenance of Djalma immediately assumed an appearance of sorrowful dignity; he raised his head proudly, and said in a stern and haughty voice:

"Since this friend hides himself from me, he must either be ashamed of me, or there is reason for me to be ashamed of him. I only accept hospitality from those who are worthy of me, and who think me worthy of them. I leave this house."

So saying, Djalma rose with such an air of determination that Rodin exclaimed:

"Listen to me, my dear prince. Allow me to tell you that your petulance and touchiness are almost incredible. Though we have endeavored to remind you of your beautiful country, we are here in Europe, in France, in the center of Paris. This consideration may perhaps a little modify your views. Listen to me, I conjure you."

Notwithstanding his complete ignorance of certain social conventionalisms, Djalma had too much good sense and uprightness not to appreciate reason when it appeared reasonable. The words of Rodin calmed him. With that ingenuous modesty with which natures full of strength and generosity are almost always endowed, he answered mildly:

"You are right, father. I am no longer in my own country. Here the customs are different. I will reflect upon it."

Notwithstanding his craft and suppleness, Rodin sometimes found himself perplexed by the wild and unforeseen ideas of the young Indian. Thus he saw, to his great surprise, that Djalma now remained pensive for some minutes, after which he resumed in a calm but firm tone:

"I have obeyed you, father; I have reflected."

"Well, my dear prince?"

"In no country in the world, under no pretext, should a man of honor conceal his friendship for another man of honor."

"But suppose there should be danger in avowing this friendship?" said Rodin, very uneasy at the turn the conversation was taking.

Djalma eyed the Jesuit with contemptuous astonishment and made no reply.

"I understand your silence, my dear prince: a brave man ought to defy danger. True; but if it should be you that the danger threatens in case this friendship were discovered, would not your man of honor be excusable, even praiseworthy, to persist in remaining unknown?"

"I accept nothing from a friend who thinks me capable of denying him from cowardice."

"Dear prince—listen to me."

"Adieu, father."

"Yet, reflect!"

"I have said it," replied Djalma, in an abrupt and almost sovereign tone as he walked toward the door.

"But suppose a woman were concerned," cried Rodin, driven to extremity, and hastening after the young Indian, for he really feared that Djalma might rush from the house and thus overthrow all his projects.

At the last words of Rodin the Indian stopped abruptly.

"A woman!" said he with a start, and turning red. "A woman is concerned?"

"Why, yes! suppose it were a woman," resumed Rodin, "would you not then understand her reserve, and the secrecy with which she is obliged to surround the marks of affection she wishes to give you?"

"A woman!" repeated Djalma in a trembling voice, clasping his hands in adoration; and his beautiful countenance was expressive of the deepest emotion. "A woman!" said he again. "A Parisian?"

"Yes, my dear prince, as you force me to this indiscretion I will confess to you that your friend is a real Parisian—a noble matron, endowed with the highest virtues—whose age alone merits all your respect."

"She is very old, then?" cried poor Djalma, whose charming dream was thus abruptly dispelled.

"She may be a few years older than I am," answered Rodin, with an ironical smile, expecting to see the young man express a sort of comical disappointment or angry regret.

But it was not so. To the passionate enthusiasm of love, which had for a moment lighted up the prince's features, there now succeeded a



"THUS WOULD I CRUSH MY COWARDLY ENEMIES."

respectful and touching expression. He looked at Rodin with emotion, and said to him in a broken voice :

“ This woman is, then, a mother to me ? ”

It is impossible to describe with what a pious, melancholy, and tender charm the Indian uttered the word mother.

“ You have it, my dear prince ; this respectable lady wishes to be a mother to you. But I may not reveal to you the cause of the affection she feels for you. Only, believe me, this affection is sincere, and the cause honorable. If I do not tell you her secret, it is that with us the secrets of women, young or old, are equally sacred.”

“ That is right, and I will respect it. Without seeing her I will love her—as I love God, without seeing him.”

“ And now, my dear prince, let me tell you what are the intentions of your maternal friend. This house will remain at your disposal as long as you like it ; French servants, a carriage and horses will be at your orders ; the charges of your housekeeping will be paid for you. Then, as the son of a king should live royally, I have left in the next room a casket containing five hundred louis ; every month a similar sum will be provided ; if it should not be found sufficient for your little amusements, you will tell me, and it shall be augmented.”

At a movement of Djalma, Rodin hastened to add :

“ I must tell you at once, my dear prince, that your delicacy may be quite at ease. First of all, you may accept anything from a mother ; next, as in about three months you will come into possession of an immense inheritance, it will be easy for you, if you feel the obligation a burden,—and the sum cannot exceed, at the most, four or five thousand louis,—to repay these advances. Spare nothing, then, but satisfy all your fancies. You are expected to appear in the great world of Paris in a style becoming the son of a king who was called the *Father of the Generous*. So once again I conjure you not to be restrained by a false delicacy ; if this sum should not be sufficient —— ”

“ I will ask for more. My mother is right ; the son of a monarch ought to live royally.”

Such was the answer of the Indian, made with perfect simplicity, and without any appearance of astonishment at these magnificent offers. This was natural. Djalma would have done for others what they were doing for him, for the traditions of the prodigal magnificence and splendid hospitality of Indian princes are well known. Djalma had been as moved as grateful on hearing that a woman loved him with maternal affection. As for the luxury with which she sought to surround him, he accepted it without astonishment and without scruple. This resignation, again, somewhat disconcerted Rodin, who had prepared many excellent arguments to persuade the Indian to accept his offers.

"Well, then, it's all agreed, my dear prince," resumed the Jesuit. "Now, as you must see the world, it's just as well to enter by the best door, as we say. One of the friends of your maternal protectress, the Count de Montbron, an old nobleman of the greatest experience, and belonging to the first society, will introduce you in some of the best houses in Paris."

"Will you not introduce me, father?"

"Alas! my dear prince, look at me. Tell me if you think I am fitted for such an office. No, no; I live alone and retired from the world. And then," added Rodin, after a short silence, fixing a penetrating, attentive, and curious look upon the prince, as if he would have subjected him to a sort of experiment by what follows; "and then, you see, M. de Montbron will be better able than I should, in the world you are about to enter, to enlighten you as to the snares that will be laid for you. For if you have friends you have also enemies—cowardly enemies, as you know, who have abused your confidence in an infamous manner and have made sport of you. And as, unfortunately, their power is equal to their wickedness, it would perhaps be more prudent in you to try to avoid them—to fly instead of resisting them openly."

At the remembrance of his enemies, at the thought of flying from them, Djalma trembled in every limb; his features became of a livid paleness; his eyes, wide open, so that the pupil was encircled with white, sparkled with lurid fire; never had scorn, hatred, and the desire of vengeance expressed themselves so terribly on a human face. His upper lip, blood-red, was curled convulsively, exposing a row of small, white, and close-set teeth, and giving to his countenance, lately so charming, an air of such animal ferocity that Rodin started from his seat, and exclaimed:

"What is the matter, prince? You frighten me."

Djalma did not answer. Half leaning forward, with his hands clenched in rage, he seemed to cling to one of the arms of the chair for fear of yielding to a burst of terrific fury. At this moment the amber mouth-piece of his pipe rolled by chance under one of his feet; the violent tension which contracted all the muscles of the young Indian, was so powerful, and, notwithstanding his youth and his light figure, he was endowed with such vigor, that with one abrupt stamp he powdered to dust the piece of amber, in spite of its extreme hardness.

"In the name of Heaven, what is the matter, prince?" cried Rodin.

"Thus would I crush my cowardly enemies!" exclaimed Djalma, with menacing and excited look.

Then, as if these words had brought his rage to a climax, he bounded

from his seat, and, with haggard eyes, strode about the room for some seconds in all directions, as if he sought for some weapon, and uttered from time to time a hoarse cry, which he endeavored to stifle by thrusting his clenched fist against his mouth, while his jaws moved convulsively. It was the impotent rage of a wild beast thirsting for blood. Yet in all this the young Indian preserved a great and savage beauty; it was evident that these instincts of sanguinary ardor and blind intrepidity, now excited to this pitch by horror of treachery and cowardice, when applied to war, or to those gigantic Indian hunts which are even more bloody than a battle, must make of Djalma what he really was — a hero.

Rodin admired with deep and ominous joy the fiery impetuosity of passion in the young Indian, for, under various conceivable circumstances, the effect must be terrible. Suddenly, to the Jesuit's great surprise, the tempest was appeased. Djalma's fury was calmed thus instantaneously, because reflection showed him how vain it was. Ashamed of his childish violence, he cast down his eyes. His countenance remained pale and gloomy; and, with a cold tranquillity, far more formidable than the violence to which he had yielded, he said to Rodin:

"Father, you will this day lead me to meet my enemies."

"In what end, my dear prince? What would you do?"

"Kill the cowards!"

"Kill them! you must not think of it."

"Faringhea will aid me."

"Remember, you are not on the banks of the Ganges, and here one does not kill an enemy like a hunted tiger."

"One fights with a loyal enemy, but one kills a traitor like an accursed dog," replied Djalma, with as much conviction as tranquillity.

"Ah, prince, whose father was the *Father of the Generous*," said Rodin, in a grave voice; "what pleasure can you find in striking down creatures as cowardly as they are wicked?"

"To destroy what is dangerous is a duty"

"So, prince, you seek for revenge?"

"I do not revenge myself on a serpent," said the Indian, with haughty bitterness; "I crush it."

"But, my dear prince, here we cannot get rid of our enemies in that manner. If we have cause of complaint ——"

"Women and children complain," said Djalma, interrupting Rodin; "men strike."

"Still on the banks of the Ganges, my dear prince. Here, society takes your cause into its own hands, examines, judges, and if there be good reason punishes."

"In my own quarrel I am both judge and executioner."

"Pray listen to me: you have escaped the odious snares of your enemies, have you not? — Well! suppose it were thanks to the devotion of the venerable woman who has for you the tenderness of a mother, and that she were to ask you to forgive them, — she, who saved you from their hands, — what would you do then?"

The Indian hung his head and was silent.

Profiting by this hesitation, Rodin continued:

"I might say to you that I know your enemies, but that in the dread of seeing you commit some terrible imprudence, I would conceal their names from you forever. But no! I swear to you, that if the respectable person who loves you as her son should find it either right or useful that I should tell you their names, I will do so — until she has pronounced, I must be silent."

Djalma looked at Rodin with a dark and wrathful air.

At this moment Faringhea entered and said to Rodin:

"A man with a letter, not finding you at home, has been sent on here. Am I to receive it? He says it comes from the Abbé d'Aigrigny"

"Certainly," answered Rodin. "That is," he added, "with the prince's permission."

Djalma nodded in reply; Faringhea went out.

"You will excuse what I have done, dear prince. I expected this morning a very important letter. As it was late in coming to hand, I ordered it to be sent on."

A few minutes after, Faringhea returned with the letter, which he delivered to Rodin — and the half-caste again withdrew

CHAPTER IX

ADRIENNE AND DJALMA



WHEN Faringhea had quitted the room, Rodin took the letter from Abbé d'Aigrigny with one hand, and with the other appeared to be looking for something, first in the side-pocket of his great-coat, then in the pocket behind, then in that of his trousers; and, not finding what he sought, he laid the letter on his knee, and felt himself all over with both hands, with an air of regret and uneasiness.

The divers movements of this pantomime, performed in the most natural manner, were crowned by the exclamations:

"Oh! dear me! how vexatious!"

"What is the matter?" asked Djalma, starting from the gloomy silence in which he had been plunged for some minutes.

"Alas! my dear prince!" replied Rodin, "the most vulgar and puerile accident may sometimes cause the greatest inconvenience. I have forgotten or lost my spectacles. Now, in this twilight, with the very poor eyesight that years of labor have left me, it will be absolutely impossible for me to read this most important letter — and an immediate answer is expected — most simple and categorical — a yes or a no. Time presses; it is really most annoying. If," added Rodin, laying great stress on his words, without looking at Djalma, but so as the prince might remark it; "if only some one would render me the service to read it for me; but there is no one — no one!"

"Father," said Djalma obligingly, "shall I read it for you? When I have finished it, I shall forget what I have read."

"You?" cried Rodin, as if the proposition of the Indian had appeared to him extravagant and dangerous; "it is impossible, prince, for you to read this letter."

"Then excuse my having offered," said Djalma mildly

"And yet," resumed Rodin, after a moment's reflection, and as if speaking to himself, "why not?"

And he added, addressing Djalma :

"Would you really be so obliging, my dear prince ! I should not have ventured to ask you this service."

So saying, Rodin delivered the letter to Djalma, who read aloud as follows :

" ' Your visit this morning to the Hotel Saint-Dizier can only be considered, from what I hear, as a new act of aggression on your part.

" ' Here is the last proposition I have to make. It may be as fruitless as the step I took yesterday, when I called upon you in the Rue Clovis.

" ' After that long and painful explanation, I told you that I would write to you. I keep my promise, and here is my ultimatum.

" ' First of all, a piece of advice. Beware ! If you are determined to maintain so unequal a struggle, you will be exposed even to the hatred of those whom you so foolishly seek to protect. There are a thousand ways to ruin you with them by enlightening them as to your projects. It will be proved to them that you have shared in the plot which you now pretend to reveal, not from generosity, but from cupidity.' "

Though Djalma had the delicacy to feel that the least question on the subject of this letter would be a serious indiscretion, he could not forbear turning his head suddenly toward the Jesuit as he read the last passage.

"Oh, yes ! it relates to me. Such as you see me, my dear prince," added he, glancing at his shabby clothes, "I am accused of cupidity."

"And who are these people that you protect ? "

"Those I protect ? " said Rodin, feigning some hesitation, as if he had been embarrassed to find an answer ; "who are those I protect ? Hem, hem—I will tell you. They are poor devils without resources ; good people without a penny, having only a just cause on their side, in a lawsuit in which they are engaged. They are threatened with destruction by powerful parties — very powerful parties ; but, happily, these latter are known to me, and I am able to unmask them. What else could have been ? Being myself poor and weak, I range myself naturally on the side of the poor and weak. But continue, I beg of you."

Djalma resumed :

" ' You have therefore everything to fear if you persist in your hostility, and nothing to gain by taking the side of those whom you call your friends. They might more justly be termed your dupes, for your disinterestedness would be inexplicable were it sincere. It must therefore conceal some after-thought of cupidity.

" ' Well ! in that view of the case, we can offer you ample compensation ; with this difference, that your hopes are now entirely founded on the probable gratitude of your friends, a very doubtful chance at the best, whereas our offers will be realized on the instant. To speak clearly, this is what we ask, what we exact of you. This very night, before twelve, you must have left Paris, and engage not to return for six months.' "

Djalma could not repress a movement of surprise, and looked at Rodin.

"Quite natural," said the latter; "the cause of my poor friends would be judged by that time, and I should be unable to watch over them. You see how it is, my dear prince," added Rodin, with bitter indigna-



tion. "But please continue, and excuse me for having interrupted you; though, indeed, such impudence disgusts me."

Djalma continued:

“ ‘That we may be certain of your removal from Paris for six months, you will go to the house of one of our friends in Germany. You will there be received with generous hospitality, but forcibly detained until the expiration of the term.’ ”

“ Yes, yes ! a voluntary prison,” said Rodin.

“ ‘On these conditions you will receive a pension of one thousand francs a month, to begin from your departure from Paris, ten thousand francs down, and twenty thousand at the end of the six months ; the whole to be completely secured to you. Finally, at the end of the six months, we will place you in a position both honorable and independent.’ ”

Djalma having stopped short with involuntary indignation, Rodin said to him :

“ Let me beg you to continue, my dear prince. Read to the end, and it will give you some idea of what passes in the midst of our civilization.”

Djalma resumed :

“ ‘You know well enough the course of affairs and what we are, to feel that in providing for your absence we only wish to get rid of an enemy, not very dangerous, but rather troublesome. Do not be blinded by your first success. The results of your denunciation will be stifled, because they are calumnious. The judge who received your evidence will soon repent his odious partiality. You may make what use you please of this letter. We know what we write, to whom we write, and how we write. You will receive this letter at three o’clock ; if by four o’clock we have not your full and complete acceptance, written with your own hand at the bottom of this letter, war must commence between us — and not from to-morrow, but on the instant.’ ”

Having finished reading the letter, Djalma looked at Rodin, who said to him :

“ Permit me to summon Faringhea.”

He rang the bell and the half-caste appeared.

Rodin took the letter from the hands of Djalma, tore it into halves, rubbed it between his palms so as to make a sort of a ball, and said to the half-caste, as he returned it to him :

“ Give this paper to the person who waits for it and tell him that is my only answer to his shameless and insolent letter ; you understand me — this shameless and insolent letter.”

“ I understand,” said the half-caste ; and he went out.

“ This will perhaps be a dangerous war for you, father,” said the Indian, with interest.

“ Yes, dear prince, it may be dangerous, but I am not like you ; I have no wish to kill my enemies because they are cowardly and wicked. I fight them under the shield of the law. Imitate me in this.”

Then, seeing that the countenance of Djalma darkened, he added :

“ I am wrong ; I will advise you no more on this subject. Only, let us defer the decision to the judgment of your noble and motherly pro-

tectress. I shall see her to-morrow ; if she consents I will tell you the names of your enemies ; if not—not.”

“ And this woman, this second mother,” said Djalma, “ is her character such that I can rely on her judgment ? ”

“ She ! ” cried Rodin, clasping his hands and speaking with increased excitement. “ Why, she is the most noble, the most generous, the most valiant being upon earth ! why, if you were really her son, and she loved you with all the strength of maternal affection, and a case arose in which you had to choose between an act of baseness and death, she would say to you, ‘ Die ! ’ though she might herself die with you.”

“ Oh, noble woman ! so was my mother ! ” cried Djalma, with enthusiasm.

“ Yes,” resumed Rodin, with growing energy, as he approached the window concealed by the shade, toward which he threw an oblique and anxious glance, “ if you would imagine your protectress, think only of courage, uprightness, and loyalty personified. Oh ! she has the chivalrous frankness of the brave man, joined with the high-souled dignity of the woman, who not only never in her life told a falsehood, never concealed a single thought, but who would rather die than give way to the least of those sentiments of craft and dissimulation which are almost forced upon ordinary women by the situation in which they are placed.”

It is difficult to express the admiration which shone upon the countenance of Djalma as he listened to this description. His eyes sparkled, his cheeks glowed, his heart palpitated with enthusiasm.

“ That is well, noble heart ! ” said Rodin to him, drawing still nearer to the blind ; “ I love to see your soul sparkle through your eyes, on hearing me speak thus of your unknown protectress. Oh ! but she is worthy of the pious adoration which noble hearts and great characters inspire ! ”

“ Oh ! I believe you,” cried Djalma, with enthusiasm ; “ my heart is full of admiration and also of astonishment ; for my mother is no more, and yet such a woman exists ! ”

“ Yes, she exists. For the consolation of the afflicted, for the glory of her sex, she exists ; for the honor of truth and the shame of falsehood, she exists. No lie, no disguise, has ever tainted her loyalty, brilliant and heroic as the sword of a knight. It is but a few days ago that this noble woman spoke to me these admirable words, which, in all my life, I shall not forget : ‘ Sir,’ said she, ‘ if ever I suspect any one that I love or esteem —— ’ ”

Rodin did not finish. The shade, so violently shaken that the

spring broke, was drawn up abruptly, and, to the great astonishment of Djalma, Mademoiselle de Cardoville appeared before him.

Adrienne's cloak had fallen from her shoulders, and in the violence of the movement with which she had approached the blind, her bonnet, the strings of which were untied, had also fallen. Having left home suddenly, with only just time to throw a mantle over the picturesque and charming costume which she often chose to wear when alone, she appeared so radiant with beauty to Djalma's dazzled eyes, in the center of those leaves and flowers, that the Indian believed himself under the influence of a dream.

With clasped hands, eyes wide open, the body slightly bent forward, as if in the act of prayer, he stood petrified with admiration.

Mademoiselle de Cardoville, much agitated, and her countenance glowing with emotion, remained on the threshold of the greenhouse, without entering the room.

All this had passed in less time than it takes to describe it. Hardly had the blind been raised, than Rodin, feigning surprise, exclaimed :

"You here, mademoiselle?"

"Oh, sir!" said Adrienne, in an agitated voice, "I come to terminate the phrase which you have commenced. I told you that when a suspicion crossed my mind I uttered it aloud to the person by whom it was inspired. Well! I confess it: I have failed in this honesty. I came here as a spy upon you, when your answer to the Abbé d'Aigrigny was giving me a new pledge of your devotion and sincerity. I doubted your uprightness at the moment when you were bearing testimony to my frankness. For the first time in my life I stooped to deceit; this weakness merits punishment, and I submit to it—demands reparation, and I make it—calls for apologies, and I tender them to you."

Then, turning toward Djalma, she added :

"Now, prince, I am no longer mistress of my secret. I am your relation, Mademoiselle de Cardoville; and I hope you will accept from a sister the hospitality that you did not refuse from a mother."

Djalma made no reply. Plunged in ecstatic contemplation of this sudden apparition, which surpassed his wildest and most dazzling visions, he felt a sort of intoxication, which, paralyzing the power of thought, concentrated all his faculties in the one sense of sight; and just as we sometimes seek in vain to satisfy unquenchable thirst, the burning look of the Indian sought, as it were, with devouring avidity, to take in all the rare perfections of the young lady.

Verily, never had two more divine types of beauty met face to face. Adrienne and Djalma were the very ideal of a handsome youth and

maiden. There seemed to be something providential in the meeting of these two natures, so young and so vivacious, so generous and so full of passion, so heroic and so proud, who, before coming into contact, had, singularly enough, each learned the moral worth of the other; for if, at the words of Rodin, Djalma had felt arise in his heart an admiration, as lively as it was sudden, for the valiant and generous qualities of that unknown benefactress, whom he now discovered in Mademoiselle de Cardoville, the latter had, in her turn, been moved, affected, almost terrified, by the interview she had just overheard, in which Djalma had displayed the nobleness of his soul, the delicate goodness of his heart, and the terrible transports of his temper. Then she had not been able to repress a movement of astonishment, almost admiration, at sight of the surpassing beauty of the prince; and soon after, a strange, painful sentiment, a sort of electric shock, seemed to penetrate all her being, as her eyes encountered Djalma's.

Cruelly agitated, and suffering deeply from this agitation, she tried to dissemble the impression she had received by addressing Rodin to apologize for having suspected him. But the obstinate silence of the Indian redoubled the lady's painful embarrassment. Again raising her eyes toward the prince, to invite him to respond to her fraternal offer, she met his ardent gaze wildly fixed upon her, and she looked once more with a mixture of fear, sadness, and wounded pride; then she congratulated herself on having foreseen the inexorable necessity of keeping Djalma a distance from her, such apprehension did this ardent and impetuous nature already inspire. Wishing to put an end to her present painful situation, she said to Rodin, in a low and trembling voice:

"Pray, sir, speak to the prince; repeat to him my offers. I cannot remain longer."

So saying, Adrienne turned as if to rejoin Florine.

But at the first step Djalma sprang toward her with the bound of a tiger about to be deprived of his prey. Terrified by the expression of wild excitement which inflamed the Indian's countenance, the young lady drew back with a loud scream.

At this Djalma remembered himself and all that had passed. Pale with regret and shame, trembling, dismayed, his eyes streaming with tears, and all his features marked with an expression of the most touching despair, he fell at Adrienne's feet, and, lifting his clasped hands toward her, said in a soft, supplicating, timid voice:

"Oh, remain! remain! do not leave me. I have waited for you so long!"

To this prayer, uttered with the timid simplicity of a child and a

resignation which contrasted strangely with the savage violence that had so frightened Adrienne, she replied, as she made a sign to Florine to prepare for their departure :

“ Prince, it is impossible for me to remain longer here.”

“ But you will return ? ” said Djalma, striving to restrain his tears.

“ I shall see you again ? ”

“ Oh, no ! never—never ! ” said Mademoiselle de Cardoville, in a failing voice. Then, profiting by the stupor into which her answer had thrown Djalma, Adrienne disappeared rapidly behind the plants in the greenhouse.

Florine was hastening to rejoin her mistress, when, just at the moment she passed before Rodin, he said to her in a low, quick voice :

“ To-morrow we must finish the hunchback.”

Florine trembled in every limb, and without answering Rodin, disappeared, like her mistress, behind the plants.

Broken, overpowered, Djalma remained upon his knees, with his head resting on his breast. His countenance expressed neither rage nor excitement, but a painful stupor ; he wept silently. Seeing Rodin approach him, he rose, but with so tremulous a step that he could hardly reach the divan, on which he sank down, hiding his face in his hands.

Then Rodin, advancing, said to him in a mild and insinuating tone :

“ Alas ! I feared what has happened. I did not wish you to see your benefactress ; and if I told you she was old, do you know why, dear prince ? ”

Djalma, without answering, let his hands fall upon his knees, and turned toward Rodin a countenance still bathed in tears.

“ I knew that Mademoiselle de Cardoville was charming, and at your age it is so easy to fall in love,” continued Rodin. “ I wished to spare you that misfortune, my dear prince, for your beautiful protectress passionately loves a handsome young man of this town.”

Upon these words Djalma suddenly pressed both hands to his heart, as if he felt a piercing stab, uttered a cry of savage grief, threw back his head, and fell fainting upon the divan.

Rodin looked at him coldly for some seconds, and then said as he went away, brushing his old hat with his elbow :

“ Come ! that works, that works ! ”

CHAPTER X

THE CONSULTATION

IT is night. It has just struck nine. It is the evening of that day on which Mademoiselle de Cardoville first found herself in presence of Djalma. Florine, pale, agitated, trembling, with a candle in her hand, had just entered a bedroom, plainly but comfortably furnished.

This room was one of the apartments occupied by Mother Bunch, in Adrienne's house. They were situated on the ground-floor, and had two entrances: one opened on the garden and the other on the courtyard. From this side came the persons who applied to the workgirl for succor; an antechamber in which they waited, a parlor in which they were received, constituted Mother Bunch's apartments, along with the bedroom, which Florine had just entered, looking about her with an anxious and alarmed air, scarcely touching the carpet with the tips of her satin shoes, holding her breath, and listening at the least noise. Placing the candle upon the chimney-piece, she took a rapid survey of the chamber, and approached the mahogany desk, surmounted by a well-filled book-case. The key had been left in the drawers of this piece of furniture, and they were all three examined by Florine. They contained different petitions from persons in distress, and various notes in the girl's handwriting. That was not what Florine wanted. Three card-board boxes were placed in pigeon-holes beneath the book-case. These also were vainly explored, and Florine, with a gesture of vexation, looked and listened anxiously; then, seeing a chest of drawers, she made therein a fresh and useless search. Near the foot of the bed was a little door, leading to a dressing-room. Florine entered it and looked—at first without success—into a large wardrobe, in which were suspended several black dresses, recently made for Mother Bunch, by order of Mademoiselle de Cardoville. Perceiving at the bottom of this wardrobe, half hidden beneath a cloak, a very shabby little trunk, Florine opened it hastily, and found there, carefully folded up, the poor old gar-

ments in which the workgirl had been clad when she first entered this opulent mansion.

Florine started, an involuntary emotion contracted her features; but considering that she had not liberty to indulge her feelings, but only to obey Rodin's implacable orders, she hastily closed both trunk and wardrobe, and leaving the dressing-room, returned into the bed-chamber. After having again examined the writing-stand, a sudden idea occurred to her. Not content with once more searching the card-board boxes, she drew out one of them from the pigeon-hole, hoping to find what she sought behind the box: her first attempt failed, but the second was more successful. She found behind the middle box a copy-book of considerable thickness. She started in surprise, for she had expected something else; yet she took the manuscript, opened it, and rapidly turned over the leaves. After having perused several pages, she manifested her satisfaction, and seemed as if about to put the book in her pocket; but after a moment's reflection, she replaced it where she had found it, arranged everything in order, took her candle, and quitted the apartment without being discovered—of which, indeed, she had felt pretty sure, knowing that Mother Bunch would be occupied with *Mademoiselle de Cardoville* for some hours.

The day after Florine's researches, Mother Bunch, alone in her bed-chamber, was seated in an arm-chair, close to a good fire. A thick carpet covered the floor; through the window-curtains could be seen the lawn of a large garden; the deep silence was only interrupted by the regular ticking of a clock and the crackling of the wood. Her hands resting on the arms of the chair, she gave way to a feeling of happiness such as she had never so completely enjoyed since she took up her residence at the hotel. For her, accustomed so long to cruel privations, there was a kind of inexpressible charm in the calm silence of this retreat—in the cheerful aspect of the garden, and, above all, in the consciousness that she was indebted for this comfortable position to the resignation and energy she had displayed, in the thick of the many severe trials which now ended so happily.

An old woman with a mild and friendly countenance, who had been by express desire of Adrienne attached to the hunchback's service, entered the room and said to her:

"*Mademoiselle*, a young man wishes to speak to you on pressing business. He gives his name as *Agricola Baudoin*."

At this name Mother Bunch uttered an exclamation of surprise and joy, blushed slightly, rose, and ran to the door which led to the parlor in which was *Agricola*.

"Good-morning, dear sister," said the smith, cordially embracing the young girl, whose cheeks burned crimson beneath those fraternal kisses.

"Ah, me!" cried the seamstress on a sudden, as she looked anxiously



at Agricola; "what is that black band on your forehead? You have been wounded!"

"A mere nothing," said the smith, "really nothing. Do not think of

it. I will tell you all about that presently. But first, I have things of importance to communicate."

"Come into my room, then; we shall be alone," said Mother Bunch, as she went before Agricola.

Notwithstanding the expression of uneasiness which was visible on the countenance of Agricola, he could not forbear smiling with pleasure as he entered the room and looked around him.

"Excellent, my poor sister! this is how I would always have you lodged. I recognize here the hand of Mademoiselle de Cardoville. What a heart! what a noble mind! — Dost know, she wrote to me the day before yesterday, to thank me for what I had done for her, and sent me a gold pin (very plain), which she said I need not hesitate to accept, as it had no other value but that of having been worn by her mother! You can't tell how much I was affected by the delicacy of this gift!"

"Nothing must astonish you from a heart like hers," answered the hunchback. "But the wound — the wound?"

"Presently, my good sister; I have so many things to tell you. Let us begin by what is most pressing, for I want you to give me some good advice in a very serious case. You know how much confidence I have in your excellent heart and judgment. And then, I have to ask of you a service — oh! a great service," added the smith, in an earnest and almost solemn tone, which astonished his hearer. "Let us begin with what is not personal to myself."

"Speak quickly"

"Since my mother went with Gabriel to the little country curacy he has obtained, and since my father lodges with Marshal Simon and the young ladies, I have resided, you know, with my mates, at M. Hardy's factory, in the common dwelling-house. Now, this morning — but first, I must tell you that M. Hardy, who has lately returned from a journey, is again absent for a few days on business. This morning, then, at the hour of breakfast, I remained at work a little after the last stroke of the bell; I was leaving the workshop to go to our eating-room, when I saw entering the court-yard a lady who had just got out of a hackney-coach. I remarked that she was fair, though her veil was half down; she had a mild and pretty countenance, and her dress was that of a fashionable lady. Struck with her paleness and her anxious, frightened air, I asked her if she wanted anything.

"'Sir,' said she to me, in a trembling voice, and as if with a great effort, 'do you belong to this factory?'

"'Yes, madame.'

"'M. Hardy is then in danger?' she exclaimed.

"'M. Hardy, madame? He has not yet returned home.'

“‘What!’ she went on, ‘M. Hardy did not come hither yesterday evening? Was he not dangerously wounded by some of the machinery?’

“As she said these words, the poor young lady’s lips trembled, and I saw large tears standing in her eyes.

“‘Thank God, madame! all this is entirely false,’ said I, ‘for M. Hardy has not returned, and, indeed, is only expected by to-morrow or the day after.’

“‘You are quite sure that he has not returned? quite sure that he is not hurt?’ resumed the pretty young lady, drying her eyes.

“‘Quite sure, madame; if M. Hardy were in danger, I should not be so quiet in talking to you about him.’

“‘Oh, thank God! thank God!’ cried the young lady.

“Then she expressed to me her gratitude with so happy, so feeling an air, that I was quite touched by it. But suddenly, as if then only she felt ashamed of the step she had taken, she let down her veil, left me precipitately, went out of the court-yard, and got once more into the hackney-coach that had brought her. I said to myself, ‘This is a lady who takes great interest in M. Hardy and has been alarmed by a false report.’”

“She loves him, doubtless,” said Mother Bunch, much moved, “and, in her anxiety, she perhaps committed an act of imprudence in coming to inquire after him.”

“It is only too true. I saw her get into the coach with interest, for her emotion had infected me. The coach started, and what did I see a few seconds after? A cab, which the young lady could not have perceived, for it had been hidden by an angle of the wall; and, as it turned round the corner, I distinguished perfectly a man seated by the driver’s side, and making signs to him to take the same road as the hackney-coach.”

“The poor young lady was followed,” said Mother Bunch anxiously

“No doubt of it; so I instantly hastened after the coach, reached it, and through the blinds, that were let down, I said to the young lady, while I kept running by the side of the coach-door: ‘Take care, madame, you are followed by a cab.’”

“Well, Agricola! and what did she answer?”

“I heard her exclaim, ‘Great Heaven!’ with an accent of despair. The coach continued its course. The cab soon came up with me; I saw by the side of the driver a great, fat, ruddy man, who, having watched me running after the coach, no doubt suspected something, for he looked at me somewhat uneasily.”

“And when does M. Hardy return?” asked the hunchback.

"To-morrow or the day after. Now, my good sister, advise me. It is evident that this young lady loves M. Hardy. She is probably married, for she looked so embarrassed when she spoke to me, and she uttered a cry of terror on learning that she was followed. What shall I do? I wished to ask advice of Father Simon, but he is so very strict in such matters; and then a love affair at his age! while you are so delicate and sensible, my good sister, that you will understand it all."

The girl started and smiled bitterly; Agricola did not perceive it, and thus continued:

"So I said to myself, 'There is only Mother Bunch who can give me good advice.' Suppose M. Hardy returns to-morrow, shall I tell him what has passed or not?"

"Wait a moment," cried the other, suddenly interrupting Agricola and appearing to recollect something; "when I went to St. Mary's Convent to ask for work of the superior, she proposed that I should be employed by the day in a house in which I was to watch, or, in other words, to act as a spy——"

"What a wretch!"

"And do you know," said the girl, "with whom I was to begin this odious trade? Why, with a Madame de—Frémont, or de Brémont,—I do not remember which,—a very religious woman, whose daughter, a young married lady, received visits a great deal too frequent, according to the superior, from a certain manufacturer."

"What do you say?" cried Agricola. "This manufacturer must be ——"

"M. Hardy I had too many reasons to remember that name when it was pronounced by the superior. Since that day so many other events have taken place that I had almost forgotten the circumstance. But it is probable that this young lady is the one of whom I heard speak at the convent."

"And what interest had the superior of the convent to set a spy upon her?" asked the smith.

"I do not know; but it is clear that the same interest still exists, since the young lady was followed, and perhaps at this hour is discovered and dishonored. Oh! it is dreadful!"

Then, seeing Agricola start suddenly, Mother Bunch added:

"What, then, is the matter?"

"Yes; why not?" said the smith, speaking to himself; "why may not all this be the work of the same hand? The superior of a convent may have a private understanding with an abbé; but then for what end?"

"Explain yourself, Agricola," said the girl. "And then, where did you get your wound? Tell me that, I conjure you."

"It is of my wound that I am just going to speak; for, in truth, the more I think of it, the more this adventure of the young lady seems to connect itself with other facts."

"How so?"

"You must know that for the last few days singular things are passing in the neighborhood of our factory. First, as we are in Lent, an abbé from Paris—a tall, fine-looking man, they say—has come to preach in the little village of Villiers, which is only a quarter of a league from our works. The abbé has found occasion to slander and attack M. Hardy in his sermons."

"How is that?"

"M. Hardy has printed certain rules with regard to our work and the rights and benefits he grants us. These rules are followed by various maxims as noble as they are simple, with precepts of brotherly love such as all the world can understand, extracted from different philosophies and different religions. But because M. Hardy has chosen what is best in all religions the abbé concludes that M. Hardy has no religion at all, and he has therefore not only attacked him for this in the pulpit, but has denounced our factory as a center of perdition and damnable corruption, because on Sundays, instead of going to listen to his sermons or to drink at a tavern, our comrades with their wives and children pass their time in cultivating their little gardens, in reading, singing in chorus, or dancing together in the common dwelling-house. The abbé has even gone so far as to say that the neighborhood of such an assemblage of atheists, as he calls us, might draw down the anger of Heaven upon the country; that the hovering of cholera was much talked about, and that very possibly, thanks to our impious presence, the plague might fall upon all our neighborhood."

"But to tell such things to ignorant people," exclaimed Mother Bunch, "is likely to excite them to fatal actions."

"That is just what the abbé wants."

"What do you tell me?"

"The people of the environs, still more excited, no doubt, by other agitators, show themselves hostile to the workmen of our factory. Their hatred, or at least their envy, has been turned to account. Seeing us live all together, well lodged, well warmed, and comfortably clad, active, gay, and laborious, their jealousy has been embittered by the sermons, and by the secret maneuvers of some depraved characters, who are known to be bad workmen, in the employment of M. Tripeaud, our opposition. All this excitement is beginning to bear fruit; there have been already two or three fights between us and our neighbors. It was in one of these skirmishes that I received a blow with a stone on my head."

"Is it not serious, Agricola?—are you quite sure?" said Mother Bunch anxiously.

"It is nothing at all, I tell you. But the enemies of M. Hardy have not confined themselves to preaching. They have brought into play something far more dangerous."

"What is that?"

"I, and nearly all my comrades, did our part in the three Revolutionary days of July; but we are not eager at present, for good reasons, to take up arms again. That is not everybody's opinion; well, we do not blame others, but we have our own ideas; and Father Simon, who is as brave as his son and as good a patriot as any one, approves and directs us. Now, for some days past, we find all about the factory, in the garden, in the courts, printed papers to this effect: 'You are selfish cowards; because chance has given you a good master, you remain indifferent to the misfortunes of your brothers and to the means of freeing them; material comforts have enervated your hearts.'"

"Dear me, Agricola! what frightful perseverance in wickedness!"

"Yes! and unfortunately these devices have their effect on some of our younger mates. As the appeal was, after all, to proud and generous sentiments, it has had some influence. Already, seeds of division have shown themselves in our workshops, where, before, all were united as brothers. A secret agitation now reigns there. Cold suspicion takes the place, with some, of our accustomed cordiality. Now, if I tell you that I am nearly sure these printed papers, thrown over the walls of our factory, to raise these little sparks of discord amongst us, have been scattered about by the emissaries of this same preaching abbé, would it not seem from all this, taken in conjunction with what happened this morning to the young lady, that M. Hardy has of late numerous enemies?"

"Like you, I think it very fearful, Agricola," said the girl; "and it is so serious that M. Hardy alone can take a proper decision on the subject. As for what happened this morning to the young lady, it appears to me that, immediately on M. Hardy's return, you should ask for an interview with him, and, however delicate such a communication may be, tell him all that passed."

"There is the difficulty. Shall I not seem as if wishing to pry into his secrets?"

"If the young lady had not been followed, I should have shared your scruples. But she was watched, and is evidently in danger. It is therefore, in my opinion, your duty to warn M. Hardy. Suppose—which is not improbable—that the lady is married; would it not be better, for a thousand reasons, that M. Hardy should know all?"

"You are right, my good sister; I will follow your advice. M. Hardy shall know everything. But now that we have spoken of others, I have

to speak of myself — yes, of myself; for it concerns a matter on which may depend the happiness of my whole life,” added the smith, in a tone of seriousness which struck his hearer. “You know,” proceeded Agricola, after a moment’s silence, “that, from my childhood, I have never concealed anything from you, that I have told you everything, absolutely everything?”

“I know it, Agricola, I know it,” said the hunchback, stretching out her white and slender hand to the smith, who grasped it cordially and thus continued:

“When I say everything, I am not quite exact — for I have always concealed from you my little love-affairs — because, though we may tell almost anything to a sister, there are subjects of which we ought not to speak to a good and virtuous girl, such as you are.”

“I thank you, Agricola. I had remarked this reserve on your part,” observed the other, casting down her eyes and heroically repressing the grief she felt; “I thank you.”

“But for the very reason that I made it a duty never to speak to you of such love affairs, I said to myself, if ever it should happen that I have a serious passion,—such a love as makes one think of marriage,—oh! then, just as we tell our sister even before our father and mother, my good sister shall be the first to be informed of it.”

“You are very kind, Agricola.”

“Well, then! the serious passion has come at last,—I am over head and ears in love, and I think of marriage.”

At these words of Agricola, poor Mother Bunch felt herself for an instant paralyzed. It seemed as if all her blood was suddenly frozen in her veins. For some seconds she thought she was going to die. Her heart ceased to beat; she felt it, not breaking, but melting away to nothing. Then, the first blasting emotion over, like those martyrs who found, in the very excitement of pain, the terrible power to smile in the midst of tortures, the unfortunate girl found, in the fear of betraying the secret of her fatal and ridiculous love, almost incredible energy. She raised her head, looked at the smith calmly, almost serenely, and said to him in a firm voice:

“Ah! so you truly love?”

“That is to say, my good sister, that, for the last four days, I scarcely live at all, or live only upon this passion.”

“It is only since four days that you have been in love?”

“Not more — but time has nothing to do with it.”

“And is *she* very pretty?”

“Dark hair; the figure of a nymph; fair as a lily; blue eyes, as large as that — and as mild, as good as your own.”

“You flatter me, Agricola.”

"No, no, it is Angela that I flatter — for that's her name. What a pretty one! Is it not, my good Mother Bunch?"

"A charming name," said the poor girl, contrasting bitterly that graceful appellation with her own nickname, which the thoughtless Agricola applied to her without thinking of it. Then she resumed, with fearful calmness:

"Angela? yes, it is a charming name!"

"Well, then! imagine to yourself that this name is not only suited to her face, but to her heart. In a word, I believe her heart to be almost equal to yours."

"She has my eyes; she has my heart," said Mother Bunch, smiling. "It is singular how like we are."

Agricola did not perceive the irony of despair contained in these words. He resumed, with a tenderness as sincere as it was inexorable:

"Do you think, my good girl, that I could ever have fallen seriously in love with any one who had not in character, heart, and mind much of you?"

"Come, brother," said the girl, smiling — yes, the unfortunate creature had the strength to smile; "come, brother, you are in a gallant vein to-day. Where did you make the acquaintance of this beautiful young person?"

"She is only the sister of one of my mates. Her mother is the head laundress in our common dwelling, and as she was in want of assistance, and we always take in preference the relations of members of the association, Madame Bertin — that's the mother's name — sent for her daughter from Lille, where she had been stopping with one of her aunts, and, for the last five days, she has been in the laundry. The first evening I saw her I passed three hours, after work was over, in talking with her, and her mother and her brother; and the next day I felt that my heart was gone; the day after that, the feeling was only stronger — and now I am quite mad about her, and resolved on marriage — according as you shall decide. Do not be surprised at this; everything depends upon you. I shall only ask my father's and mother's leave after I have yours."

"I do not understand you, Agricola."

"You know the utter confidence I have in the incredible instinct of your heart. Many times you have said to me, 'Agricola, love this person, love that person, have confidence in that other' — and never yet were you deceived. Well! you must now render me the same service. You will ask permission of Mademoiselle de Cardoville to absent yourself; I will take you to the factory; I have spoken of you to Madame Bertin and her daughter as of a beloved sister; and, according to your impres-

sion at sight of Angela, I will declare myself or not. This may be childishness or superstition on my part; but I am so made."

"Be it so," answered Mother Bunch, with heroic courage; "I will see



Mademoiselle Angela; I will tell you what I think of her—and that, mind you, sincerely."

"I know it. When will you come?"

"I must ask Mademoiselle de Cardoville what day she can spare me. I will let you know."

"Thanks, my good sister!" said Agricola warmly; then he added, with a smile: "Bring your best judgment with you—your full-dress judgment."

"Do not make a jest of it, brother," said Mother Bunch, in a mild, sad voice; "it is a serious matter, for it concerns the happiness of your whole life."

At this moment a modest knock was heard at the door.

"Come in," said Mother Bunch.

Florine appeared.

"My mistress begs that you will come to her, if you are not engaged," said Florine to Mother Bunch.

The latter rose, and, addressing the smith, said to him:

"Please wait a moment, Agricola. I will ask Mademoiselle de Cardoville what day I can dispose of, and I will come and tell you."

So saying, the girl went out, leaving Agricola with Florine.

"I should have much wished to pay my respects to Mademoiselle de Cardoville," said Agricola; "but I feared to intrude."

"My lady is not quite well, sir," said Florine, "and receives no one to-day. I am sure that as soon as she is better she will be quite pleased to see you."

Here Mother Bunch returned and said to Agricola:

"If you can come for me to-morrow, about three o'clock, so as not to lose the whole day, we will go to the factory, and you can bring me back in the evening."

"Then, at three o'clock to-morrow, my good sister."

"At three to-morrow, Agricola."

The evening of that same day, when all was quiet in the hotel, Mother Bunch, who had remained till ten o'clock with Mademoiselle de Cardoville, reëntered her bedchamber, locked the door after her, and, finding herself at length free and unrestrained, threw herself on her knees before a chair and burst into tears. She wept long—very long. When her tears at length ceased to flow, she dried her eyes, approached the writing-desk, drew out one of the boxes from the pigeon-hole, and, taking from this hiding-place the manuscript which Florine had so rapidly glanced over the evening before, she wrote in it during a portion of the night.

CHAPTER XI

MOTHER BUNCH'S DIARY

WE have said that the hunchback wrote during a portion of the night in the book discovered the previous evening by Florine, who had not ventured to take it away until she had informed the persons who employed her of its contents, and until she had received their final orders on the subject.

Let us explain the existence of this manuscript before opening it to the reader. The day on which Mother Bunch first became aware of her love for Agricola, the first word of this manuscript had been written. Endowed with an essentially trusting character, yet always feeling herself restrained by the dread of ridicule,—a dread which, in its painful exaggeration, was the workgirl's only weakness,—to whom could the unfortunate creature have confided the secret of that fatal passion if not to paper—that mute confidant of timid and suffering souls, that patient friend, silent and cold, who, if it makes no reply to heart-rending complaints, at least always listens and never forgets?

When her heart was overflowing with emotion, sometimes mild and sad, sometimes harsh and bitter, the poor workgirl, finding a melancholy charm in these dumb and solitary outpourings of the soul, now clothed in the form of simple and touching poetry and now in unaffected prose, had accustomed herself by degrees not to confine her confidences to what immediately related to Agricola, for though he might be mixed up with all her thoughts, other reflections, which the sight of beauty, of happy love, of maternity, of wealth, of misfortune, called up within her, were so impressed with the influence of her unfortunate personal position that she would not even have dared to communicate them to him.

Such, then, was this journal of a poor daughter of the people, weak, deformed, and miserable, but endowed with an angelic soul and a fine intellect, improved by reading, meditation, and solitude; pages quite unknown, which yet contained many deep and striking views, both as

regards men and things, taken from the peculiar standpoint in which fate had placed this unfortunate creature.

The following lines, here and there abruptly interrupted or stained with tears, according to the current of her various emotions, on hearing of Agricola's deep love for Angela, formed the last pages of this journal:

“FRIDAY, March 3, 1832.

“I spent the night without any painful dreams. This morning I rose with no sorrowful presentiment. I was calm and tranquil when Agricola came.

“He did not appear to me agitated. He was simple and affectionate as he always is. He spoke to me of events relating to M. Hardy, and then, without transition, without hesitation, he said to me: ‘*The last four days I have been desperately in love. The sentiment is so serious that I think of marriage. I have come to consult you about it.*’

“That was how this overwhelming revelation was made to me—naturally and cordially—I on one side of the hearth and Agricola on the other, as if we had talked of indifferent things. And yet no more is needed to break one's heart. Some one enters, embraces you like a brother, sits down, talks, and then —

“Oh, merciful Heaven! my head wanders.

“I feel calmer now. Courage, my poor heart, courage! Should a day of misfortune again overwhelm me I will read these lines, written under the impression of the most cruel grief I can ever feel, and I will say to myself: ‘What is the present woe compared to that past?’

“My grief is indeed cruel! it is illegitimate, ridiculous, shameful; I should not dare to confess it, even to the most indulgent of mothers. Alas! there are some fearful sorrows which yet rightly make men shrug their shoulders in pity or contempt. Alas! these are forbidden misfortunes.

“Agricola has asked me to go to-morrow to see this young girl to whom he is so passionately attached, and whom he will marry if the instinct of my heart should approve the marriage. This thought is the most painful of all those which have tortured me since he so pitilessly announced this love. Pitilessly? No, Agricola; no, my brother; forgive me this unjust cry of pain! Is it that you know, can even suspect that I love you better than you love, better than you can ever love this charming creature?

“‘*Dark-haired; the figure of a nymph; fair as a lily; with blue eyes, as large as that — and almost as mild as your own.*’

“That is the portrait he drew of her. Poor Agricola! how would he

have suffered had he known that every one of his words was tearing my heart !

“Never did I so strongly feel the deep commiseration and tender pity inspired by a good, affectionate being who, in the sincerity of his ignorance, gives you your death-wound with a smile. We do not blame him ; no,—we pity him to the full extent of the grief that he would feel on learning the pain he had caused us.

“It is strange ! but never did Agricola appear to me more handsome than this morning. His manly countenance was slightly agitated as he spoke of the uneasiness of that pretty young lady. As I listened to him describing the agony of a woman who runs the risk of ruin for the man she loves, I felt my heart beat violently, my hands were burning, a soft languor floated over me. Ridiculous folly ! as if I had any right to feel thus !

.
“I remember that while he spoke I cast a rapid glance at the glass. I felt proud that I was so well dressed ; he had not even remarked it ; but no matter ; it seemed to me that my cap became me, that my hair shone finely, my gaze beamed mild. I found Agricola so handsome that I almost began to think myself less ugly—no doubt to excuse myself in my own eyes for daring to love him.

“After all, what happened to-day would have happened one day or another ! Yes, that is consoling to those who love life, like the thoughts that death is nothing, because it must come at last, one day or other.

“I have been always preserved from suicide,—the last resource of the unfortunate who prefer trusting in God to remaining amongst his creatures,—by the sense of duty. One must not only think of self. And I reflected also : ‘God is good—always good—since the most wretched beings find opportunity for love and devotion.’ How is it that I, so weak and poor, have always found means to be helpful and useful to some one ?

“This very day I felt tempted to make an end with life—Agricola and his mother had no longer need of me. Yes, but the unfortunate creatures whom Mademoiselle de Cardoville has commissioned me to watch over ? But my benefactress herself, though she has affectionately reproached me with the tenacity of my suspicions in regard to that man ? I am more than ever alarmed for her ; I feel that she is more than ever in danger—more than ever I have faith in the value of my presence near her.

“Hence, I must live. Live, to go to-morrow to see this girl whom Agricola passionately loves ?

“ Good Heaven ! why have I always known grief, and never hate ! There must be a bitter pleasure in hating. So many people hate ! Perhaps I may hate this girl — Angela, as he called her, when he said with so much simplicity : ‘ *A charming name, is it not, Mother Bunch ?* ’

“ Compare this name, which recalls an idea so full of grace, with the ironical symbol of my witch’s deformity !

“ Poor Agricola ! poor brother ! goodness is sometimes as blind as malice, I see. Should I hate this young girl ? Why ? Did she deprive me of the beauty which charms Agricola ? Can I find fault with her for being beautiful ?

“ When I was not yet accustomed to the consequences of my ugliness, I asked myself, with bitter curiosity, why the Creator had endowed his creatures so unequally. The habit of pain has allowed me to reflect calmly, and I have finished by persuading myself that to beauty and ugliness are attached the two most noble emotions of the soul — admiration and compassion. Those who are like me admire beautiful persons, such as Angela, such as Agricola, and these in their turn feel a touching pity for such as I am. Sometimes, in spite of one’s self, one has very foolish hopes. Because Agricola, from a feeling of propriety, had never spoken to me of his love affairs, I sometimes persuaded myself that he had none ; that he loved me, and that the fear of ridicule alone was with him, as with me, an obstacle in the way of confessing it. Yes, I have even made verses on that subject, and those, I think, not the worst I have written.

“ Mine is a singular position ! If I love, I am ridiculous ; if any love me, he is still more ridiculous. How did I come so to forget that, as to have suffered and to suffer what I do ? But blessed be that suffering, since it has not engendered hate — no ; for I will not hate this girl : I will perform a sister’s part to the last ; I will follow the guidance of my heart ; I have the instinct of preserving others — my heart will lead and enlighten me.

“ My only fear is that I shall burst into tears when I see her, and not be able to conquer my emotion. Oh, then ! what a revelation to Agricola — a discovery of the mad love he has inspired ! Oh, never ! the day in which he knew that would be the last of my life. There would then be within me something stronger than duty : the longing to escape from shame — that incurable shame, that burns me like a hot iron. No, no ; I will be calm. Besides, did I not just now, when with him, bear courageously a terrible trial ? I will be calm. My personal feelings must not darken the second-sight, so clear for those I love. Oh ! painful, painful task ! for the fear of yielding involuntarily to evil sentiments

must not render me too indulgent toward this girl. I might compromise Agricola's happiness, since my decision is to guide his choice.

"Poor creature that I am! How I deceive myself! Agricola asks my advice, because he thinks that I shall not have the melancholy courage to oppose his passion; or else he would say to me: 'No matter—I love; and I brave the future!'

"But then, if my advice, if the instincts of my heart are not to guide him,—if his resolution is taken beforehand,—of what use will be to-morrow's painful mission? Of what use? To obey him. Did he not say—'Come!'

"In thinking of my devotion for him, how many times in the secret depths of my heart I have asked myself if the thought had ever occurred to him to love me otherwise than as a sister; if it had ever struck him what a devoted wife he would have in me! And why should it have occurred to him? As long as he wished, as long as he may still wish, I have been, and I shall be, as devoted to him as if I were his wife, sister, or mother. Why should he desire what he already possesses?

"Married to him—oh, God!—the dream is mad as ineffable. Are not such thoughts of celestial sweetness, which include all sentiments from sisterly to maternal love, forbidden to me, on pain of ridicule as distressing as if I wore dresses and ornaments that my ugliness and deformity would render absurd?

"I wonder, if I were now plunged into the most cruel distress, whether I should suffer as much as I do, on hearing of Agricola's intended marriage? Would hunger, cold, or misery diminish this dreadful dolor?—or is it the dread pain that would make me forget hunger, cold, and misery?

"No, no; this irony is bitter. It is not well in me to speak thus. Why such deep grief? In what way have the affection, the esteem, the respect of Agricola changed toward me? I complain—but how would it be, kind Heaven! if, as, alas! too often happens, I were beautiful, loving, devoted, and he had chosen another less beautiful, less loving, less devoted?—Should I not be a thousand times more unhappy? for then I might, I would have to blame him, while now I can find no fault with him, for never having thought of a union which was impossible, because ridiculous. And had he wished it, could I ever have had the selfishness to consent to it.

"I began to write the first pages of this diary as I began these last, with my heart steeped in bitterness, and as I went on, committing to paper what I could have intrusted to no one, my soul grew calm, till

resignation came—resignation, my chosen saint, who, smiling through her tears, suffers and loves, but hopes—never!”

These words were the last in the journal. It was clear, from the blots of abundant tears, that the unfortunate creature had often paused to weep.

In truth, worn out by so many emotions, Mother Bunch, late in the night, had replaced the book behind the card-board box, not that she thought it safer there than elsewhere,—she had no suspicion of the slightest need for such precaution,—but because it was more out of the way there than in any of the drawers, which she frequently opened in presence of other people.

Determined to perform her courageous promise, and worthily accomplish her task to the end, she waited the next day for Agricola, and, firm in her heroic resolution, went with the smith to M. Hardy's factory.

Florine, informed of her departure, but detained a portion of the day in attendance on Mademoiselle de Cardoville, preferred waiting for night to perform the new orders she had asked and received since she had communicated by letter the contents of Mother Bunch's journal. Certain not to be surprised, she entered the workgirl's chamber as soon as the night was come.

Knowing the place where she should find the manuscript, she went straight to the desk, took out the box, and then drawing from her pocket a sealed letter, prepared to leave it in the place of the manuscript which she was to carry away with her. So doing, she trembled so much that she was obliged to support herself an instant by the table.

Every good sentiment was not extinct in Florine's heart; she obeyed passively the orders she received, but she felt painfully how horrible and infamous was her conduct. If only herself had been concerned, she would no doubt have had the courage to risk all rather than submit to this odious despotism; but unfortunately it was not so, and her ruin would have caused the mortal despair of another person whom she loved better than life itself. She resigned herself, therefore, not without cruel anguish, to abominable treachery.

Though she hardly ever knew for what end she acted, and this was particularly the case with regard to the abstraction of the journal, she foresaw vaguely that the substitution of this sealed letter for the manuscript would have fatal consequences for Mother Bunch, for she remembered Rodin's declaration that “it was time to finish with the young seamstress.”

What did he mean by those words? How would the letter that she was charged to put in the place of the diary contribute to bring about

this result ? She did not know, but she understood that the clear-sighted devotion of the hunchback justly alarmed the enemies of Mademoiselle de Cardoville, and that she, Florine, herself daily risked having her per-



fidly detected by the young needle-woman. This last fear put an end to the hesitations of Florine; she placed the letter behind the box and, hiding the manuscript under her apron, cautiously withdrew from the chamber

CHAPTER XII

THE DIARY CONTINUED

RETURNED into her own room, some hours after she had concealed there the manuscript abstracted from Mother Bunch's apartment, Florine yielded to her curiosity, and determined to look through it. She soon felt a growing interest, an involuntary emotion, as she read more of these private thoughts of the young seamstress. Among many pieces of verse,—which all breathed a passionate love for Agricola, a love so deep, simple, and sincere that Florine was touched by it and forgot the author's deformity,—among many pieces of verse, we say, were divers other fragments, thoughts, and narratives relating to a variety of facts. We shall quote some of them, in order to explain the profound impression that their perusal made upon Florine.

FRAGMENTS FROM THE DIARY

“This is my birthday. Until this evening I had cherished a foolish hope.

“Yesterday I went down to Madame Baudoin's to dress a little wound she had on her leg. When I entered the room Agricola was there. No doubt he was talking of me to his mother, for they stopped when I came in, and exchanged a meaning smile. In passing by the drawers I saw a pasteboard box with a pincushion-lid, and I felt myself blushing with joy as I thought this little present was destined for me, but I pretended not to see it.

“While I was on my knees before his mother, Agricola went out. I remarked that he took the little box with him. Never has Madame Baudoin been more tender and motherly than she was that morning. It appeared to me that she went to bed earlier than usual. ‘It is to send me away sooner,’ said I to myself, ‘that I may enjoy the surprise Agricola has prepared for me.’

“How my heart beat as I ran fast, very fast, up to my closet!

stopped a moment before opening the door, that my happiness might last the longer. At last I entered the room, my eyes swimming with tears of joy. I looked upon my table, my chair, my bed; there was nothing. The little box was not to be found. My heart sank within me. Then I said to myself: 'It will be to-morrow; this is only the eve of my birthday.'

"The day is gone. Evening is come. Nothing! The pretty box was not for me. It had a pincushion-cover. It was only suited for a woman. To whom has Agricola given it?"

"I suffer a good deal just now. It was a childish idea that I connected with Agricola's wishing me many happy returns of the day. I am ashamed to confess it; but it might have proved to me that he has not forgotten I have another name besides that of Mother Bunch, which they always apply to me.

"My susceptibility on this head is unfortunately so stubborn that I cannot help feeling a momentary pang of mingled shame and sorrow every time that I am called by that fairy-tale name, and yet I have had no other from infancy. It is for that very reason that I should have been so happy if Agricola had taken this opportunity to call me for once by my own humble name — *Magdalen*.

"Happily, he will never know these wishes and regrets!"

Deeper and deeper touched by this page of simple grief, Florine turned over several leaves, and continued:

"I have just been to the funeral of poor little Victorine Herbin, our neighbor. Her father, a journeyman upholsterer, is gone to work by the month, far from Paris. She died at nineteen, without a relation near her. Her agony was not long. The good woman who attended her to the last told us that she only pronounced these words:

"*'At last, oh, at last!'* and *'that with an air of satisfaction,'* added the nurse.

"Dear child! she had become so pitiful. At fifteen she was a rosebud, so pretty, so fresh-looking, with her light hair as soft as silk; but she wasted away by degrees; her trade of renovating mattresses killed her. She was slowly poisoned by the emanations from the wool. They were all the worse, that she worked almost entirely for the poor, who have cheap stuff to lie upon.

"She had the courage of a lion and an angel's resignation. She always said to me, in her low, faint voice, broken by a dry and frequent cough:

"*'I have not long to live, breathing, as I do, lime and vitriol all day long. I spit blood and have spasms that make me faint.'*

"*'Why not change your trade?'* have I said to her.

“‘Where will I find the time to make another apprenticeship!’ she would answer; ‘and it is now too late. I feel that I am *done for*. *It is not my fault*,’ added the good creature, ‘for I did not choose my employment. My father would have it so; luckily he can do without me. And then, you see, when one is dead, one cares for nothing, and has no fear of “slop wages.”’

“Victorine uttered that sad, common phrase very sincerely and with a sort of satisfaction.

“Therefore she died, repeating:

“‘*At last!*’

“It is painful to think that the labor by which the poor man earns his daily bread often becomes a long suicide! I said this the other day to Agricola; he answered me that there were many other fatal employments; those who prepare aquafortis, white lead, or minium, for instance, are sure to take incurable maladies of which they die.

“‘Do you know,’ added Agricola, ‘what they say when they start for those fatal works? — Why, “*We are going to the slaughter-house*.”’

“That made me tremble with its terrible truth.

“‘And all this takes place in our day,’ said I to him, with an aching heart; ‘and it is well known. And out of so many of the rich and powerful, no one thinks of the mortality which decimates his brothers, thus forced to eat homicidal bread!’

“‘What can you expect, my poor sister?’ answered Agricola. ‘When men are to be incorporated, that they may get killed in war, all pains are taken with them. But when they are to be organized, so as to live in peace, no one cares about it, except M. Hardy, my master. People say, “Pooh! hunger, misery, and suffering of the laboring classes — what is that to us? that is not politics.” They are *wrong*,’ added Agricola; ‘IT IS MORE THAN POLITICS.’

“As Victorine had not left anything to pay for the church service, there was only the presentation of the body under the porch; for there is not even a plain mass for the poor. Besides, as they could not give eighteen francs to the curate, no priest accompanied the pauper’s coffin to the common grave. If funerals thus abridged and cut short are sufficient in a religious point of view, why invent other and longer forms? Is it from cupidity? — If, on the other hand, they are not sufficient, why make the poor man the only victim of this insufficiency?

“But why trouble ourselves about the pomp, the incense, the chants, of which they are either too sparing or too liberal? Of what use? and for what purpose? They are vain, terrestrial things, for which the soul reckons nothing, when, radiant, it ascends toward its Creator.

“Yesterday Agricola made me read an article in a newspaper, in

which violent blame and bitter irony are by turns employed to attack what they call the baneful tendencies of some of the lower orders, to improve themselves, to write, to read the poets, and sometimes to make verses. Material enjoyments are forbidden us by poverty. Is it humane to reproach us for seeking the enjoyments of the mind?

“What harm can it do any one if every evening, after a day’s toil, remote from all pleasure, I amuse myself, unknown to all, in making a few verses, or in writing in this journal the good or bad impressions I have received? Is Agricola the worse workman because, on returning home to his mother, he employs Sunday in composing some of those popular songs which glorify the fruitful labors of the artisan, and say to all, *Hope and brotherhood*? Does he not make a more worthy use of his time than if he spent it in a tavern?

“Ah! those who blame us for these innocent and noble diversions, which relieve our painful toils and sufferings, deceive themselves when they think that, in proportion as the intellect is raised and refined, it is more difficult to bear with privations and misery, and that so the irritation increases against the luckier few

“Admitting even this to be the case,—and it is not so,—is it not better to have an intelligent, enlightened enemy, to whose heart and reason you may address yourself, than a stupid, ferocious, implacable foe? But no; enmities disappear as the mind becomes enlightened, and the horizon of compassion extends itself. We thus learn to understand moral afflictions. We discover that the rich also have to suffer intense pains, and that brotherhood in misfortune is already a link of sympathy. Alas! they also have to mourn bitterly for idolized children, beloved mistresses, revered mothers; with them, also, especially amongst the women, there are, in the height of luxury and grandeur, many broken hearts, many suffering souls, many tears shed in secret. Let them not be alarmed. By becoming their equals in intelligence, the people will learn to pity the rich, if good and unhappy, and to pity them still more if rejoicing in wickedness.

“What happiness! what a joyful day! I am giddy with delight. Oh, truly, man is good, humane, charitable. Oh, yes! the Creator has implanted within him every generous instinct; and, unless he be a monstrous exception, he never does evil willingly

“Here is what I saw just now. I will not wait for the evening to write it down, for my heart would, as it were, have time to cool.

“I had gone to carry home some work that was wanted in a hurry. I was passing the Place du Temple. A few steps from me I saw a child, about twelve years old at most, with bare head and feet, in spite of the severe weather, dressed in a shabby, ragged smock-frock and

trousers, leading by the bridle a large cart-horse, with his harness still on. From time to time the horse stopped short and refused to advance. The child, who had no whip, tugged in vain at the bridle. The horse remained motionless. Then the poor little fellow cried out, 'Oh, dear! Oh, dear!' and began to weep bitterly, looking round him as if to implore the assistance of the passers-by. His dear little face was impressed with so heart-piercing a sorrow that, without reflecting, I made an attempt at which I can now only smile, I must have presented so grotesque a figure.

"I am horribly afraid of horses, and I am still more afraid of exposing myself to public gaze. Nevertheless, I took courage, and, having an umbrella in my hand, I approached the horse, and with the impetuosity of an ant that strives to move a large stone with a little piece of straw, I struck with all my strength on the croup of the rebellious animal.

"'Oh, thanks, my good lady!' exclaimed the child, drying his eyes; 'hit him again, if you please. Perhaps he will get up.'

"I began again, heroically; but, alas! either from obstinacy or laziness, the horse bent his knees, and stretched himself out upon the ground; then, getting entangled with his harness, he tore it, and broke his great wooden collar. I had drawn back quickly, for fear of receiving a kick. Upon this new disaster, the child could only throw himself on his knees in the middle of the street, clasping his hands and sobbing, and exclaiming in a voice of despair:

"'Help! help!'

"The call was heard; several of the passers-by gathered round, and a more efficacious correction than mine was administered to the restive horse, who rose in a vile state, and without harness.

"'My master will beat me,' cried the poor child, as his tears redoubled; 'I am already two hours after time, for the horse would not go, and now he has broken his harness. My master will beat me, and turn me away. Oh, dear! what will become of me? I have no father nor mother.'

"At these words, uttered with a heart-rending accent, a worthy old clothes-dealer of the temple, who was amongst the spectators, exclaimed, with a kindly air:

"'No father nor mother! Do not grieve so, my poor little fellow; the Temple can supply everything. We will mend the harness, and, if my gossips are like me, you shall not go away bareheaded or barefooted in such weather as this.'

"This proposition was greeted with acclamation; they led away both horse and child; some were occupied in mending the harness, then one supplied a cap, another a pair of stockings, another some shoes, and another a good jacket; in a quarter of an hour the child was warmly

clad, the harness repaired, and a tall lad of eighteen, brandishing a whip, which he cracked close to the horse's ears by way of warning, said to the little boy, who, gazing first at his new clothes and then at the good woman, believed himself the hero of a fairy-tale:

“‘Where does your master live, little un?’

“‘On the Quai du Canal Saint-Martin, sir,’ answered he, in a voice trembling with joy.

“‘Very good,’ said the young man; ‘I will help you take home the horse, who will go well enough with me, and I will tell the master that the delay was no fault of your’n. A balky horse ought not to be trusted to a child of your age.’

“At the moment of setting out, the poor little fellow said timidly to the good dame, as he took off his cap to her:

“‘Will you let me kiss you, ma’am?’

His eyes were full of tears of gratitude. There was heart in that child.

“This scene of popular charity gave me delightful emotions. As long as I could, I followed with my eyes the tall young man and the child, who now could hardly keep up with the pace of the horse, rendered suddenly docile by fear of the whip.

“Yes! I repeat it with pride; man is naturally good and helpful. Nothing could have been more spontaneous than this movement of pity and tenderness in the crowd, when the poor little fellow exclaimed, ‘What will become of me? I have no father nor mother!’

“‘Unfortunate child!’ said I to myself. ‘No father nor mother. In the hands of a brutal master, who hardly covers him with a few rags, and ill-treats him into the bargain. Sleeping, no doubt, in the corner of a stable. Poor little fellow! and yet so mild and good, in spite of misery and misfortune. I saw it—he was even more grateful than pleased at the service done him. But perhaps this good natural disposition, abandoned without support or council or help, and exasperated by bad treatment, may become changed and embittered; and then will come the age of the passions—the bad temptations—

“Oh! in the deserted poor, virtue is doubly saintly and respectable!

“This morning, after having, as usual, gently reproached me for not going to mass, Agricola’s mother said to me these words, so touching in her simple and believing mouth:

“‘Luckily I pray for you and myself too, my poor girl; the good God will hear me, and you will *only* go, I hope, to Purgatory.’

“Good mother, angelic soul! she spoke those words in so grave and mild a tone, with so strong a faith in the happy result of her pious intercession, that I felt my eyes become moist, and I threw myself on her neck, as sincerely grateful as if I had believed in Purgatory.

“This day has been a lucky one for me. I hope I have found work, which luck I shall owe to a young person full of heart and goodness. She is to take me to-morrow to St. Mary’s Convent, where she thinks she can find me employment.”

Florine, already much moved by the reading, started at this passage in which Mother Bunch alluded to her, ere she continued as follows :

“Never shall I forget with what touching interest, what delicate benevolence, this handsome young girl received me, so poor and so unfortunate. It does not astonish me, for she is attached to the person of Mademoiselle de Cardoville. She must be worthy to reside with Agricola’s benefactress. It will always be dear and pleasant to me to remember her name. It is graceful and pretty as her face ; it is Florine. I am nothing, I have nothing — but if the fervent prayers of a grateful heart might be heard, Mademoiselle Florine would be happy, very happy. Alas ! I am reduced to say prayers for her — only prayers, for I can do nothing but remember and love her !”

These lines, expressing so simply the sincere gratitude of the hunchback, gave the last blow to Florine’s hesitations. She could no longer resist the generous temptation she felt. As she read these last fragments of the journal, her affection and respect for Mother Bunch made new progress. More than ever she felt how infamous it was in her to expose to sarcasms and contempt the most secret thoughts of this unfortunate creature. Happily, good is often as contagious as evil. Electrified by all that was warm, noble, and magnanimous in the pages she had just read, Florine bathed her failing virtue in that pure and vivifying source, and, yielding at last to one of those good impulses which sometimes carried her away, she left the room with the manuscript in her hand, determined, if Mother Bunch had not yet returned, to replace it — resolved to tell Rodin that, this second time, her search for the journal had been vain, the seamstress having no doubt discovered the first attempt.



THE TRYSTING-PLACE OF THE "WOLVES."

CHAPTER XIII

THE DISCOVERY



LITTLE while before Florine made up her mind to atone for her shameful breach of confidence, Mother Bunch had returned from the factory, after accomplishing to the end her painful task. After a long interview with Angela, struck, like Agricola, with the ingenuous grace, sense, and goodness with which the young girl was endowed, Mother Bunch had the courageous frankness to advise the smith to enter into this marriage.

The following scene took place while Florine, still occupied in reading the journal, had not yet taken the praiseworthy resolution of replacing it.

It was ten o'clock at night. The workgirl, returned to the Hotel Cardoville, had just entered her chamber. Worn out by so many emotions, she had thrown herself into a chair. The deepest silence reigned in the house. It was now and then interrupted by the sighing of a high wind, which raged without and shook the trees in the garden. A single candle lighted the room, which was papered with dark green. That peculiar tint and the hunchback's black dress increased her apparent paleness. Seated in an arm-chair by the side of the fire, with her head resting upon her bosom, her hands crossed upon her knees, the workgirl's countenance was melancholy and resigned; on it was visible the austere satisfaction which is felt by the consciousness of a duty well performed.

Like all those who, brought up in the merciless school of misfortune, no longer exaggerate the sentiment of sorrow, too familiar and assiduous a guest to be treated as a stranger, Mother Bunch was incapable of long yielding to idle regrets and vain despair, with regard to what was already past. Beyond doubt, the blow had been sudden, dreadful; doubtless it must leave a long and painful remembrance in the sufferer's soul; but it was soon to pass, as it were, into that chronic state of pain-durance which had become almost an integral part of her life. And then this noble creature, so indulgent to fate, found still some consolations in the inten-

sity of her bitter pain. She had been deeply touched by the marks of affection shown her by Angela, Agricola's intended; and she had felt a species of pride of the heart, in perceiving with what blind confidence, with what ineffable joy the smith accepted the favorable presentiments which seemed to consecrate his happiness.

Mother Bunch also said to herself:

"At least, henceforth I shall not be agitated by hopes, or rather by suppositions as ridiculous as they were senseless. Agricola's marriage puts a term to all the miserable reveries of my poor head."

Finally, she found a real and deep consolation in the certainty that she had been able to go through this terrible trial, and conceal from Agricola the love she felt for him. We know how formidable to this unfortunate being were those ideas of ridicule and shame which she believed would attach to the discovery of her mad passion. After having remained for some time absorbed in thought, Mother Bunch rose and advanced slowly toward the desk.

"My only recompense," said she, as she prepared the materials for writing, "will be to intrust the mute witness of my pains with this new grief. I shall at least have kept the promise that I made to myself. Believing, from the bottom of my soul, that this girl is able to make Agricola happy, I told him so with the utmost sincerity. One day, a long time hence, when I shall read over these pages, I shall perhaps find in that a compensation for all that I now suffer."

So saying, she drew the box from the pigeon-hole. Not finding her manuscript, she uttered a cry of surprise; but what was her alarm, when she perceived a letter to her address in the place of the journal!

She became deadly pale; her knees trembled; she almost fainted away. But her increasing terror gave her a fictitious energy, and she had the strength to break the seal. A bank-note for five hundred francs fell from the letter on the table, and Mother Bunch read as follows:

"*MADemoiselle*:

"There is something so original and amusing in reading in your memoirs the story of your love for Agricola, that it is impossible to resist the pleasure of acquainting him with the extent of it, of which he is doubtless ignorant, but to which he cannot fail to show himself sensible. Advantage will be taken to forward it to a multitude of other persons who might, perhaps, otherwise be unfortunately deprived of the amusing contents of your diary. Should copies and extracts not be sufficient, we will have it printed, as one cannot too much diffuse such things. Some will weep — others will laugh — what appears superb to one set of people will seem ridiculous to another; such is life — but your journal will surely make a great sensation.

"As you are capable of wishing to avoid your triumph, and as you were only covered with rags when you were received out of charity into this house, where you wish to *figure* as the great lady, which does not suit your *shape* for more reasons than one, we

inclose in the present five hundred francs to pay for your day-book, and prevent your being without resources, in case you should be modest enough to shrink from the congratulations which await you, certain to overwhelm you by to-morrow, for, at this hour, your journal is already in circulation.

“ ‘One of your brethren,

“ ‘A Real MOTHER BUNCH.’ ”

The vulgar, mocking, and insolent tone of this letter, which was purposely written in the character of a jealous lackey dissatisfied with the admission of the unfortunate creature into the house, had been calculated with infernal skill, and was sure to produce the effect intended.

“Oh, good Heaven!” were the only words the unfortunate girl could pronounce, in her stupor and alarm.

Now, if we remember in what passionate terms she had expressed her love for her adopted brother, if we recall many passages of this manuscript, in which she revealed the painful wounds often inflicted on her by Agricola without knowing it, and if we consider how great was her terror of ridicule, we shall understand her mad despair on reading this infamous letter. Mother Bunch did not think for a moment of all the noble words and touching narratives contained in her journal. The one horrible idea which weighed down the troubled spirit of the unfortunate creature was that on the morrow Agricola, Mademoiselle de Cardoville, and an insolent and mocking crowd would be informed of this ridiculous love, which would, she imagined, crush her with shame and confusion. This new blow was so stunning that the recipient staggered a moment beneath the unexpected shock. For some minutes she remained completely inert and helpless; then, upon reflection, she suddenly felt conscious of a terrible necessity

This hospitable mansion, where she had found a sure refuge after so many misfortunes, must be left forever. The trembling timidity and sensitive delicacy of the poor creature did not permit her to remain a minute more in this dwelling, where the most secret recesses of her soul had been laid open, profaned, and exposed no doubt to sarcasm and contempt. She did not think of demanding justice and revenge from Mademoiselle de Cardoville. To cause a ferment of trouble and irritation in this house, at the moment of quitting it, would have appeared to her ingratitude toward her benefactress. She did not seek to discover the author of the motive of this odious robbery and insulting letter. Why should she, resolved, as she was, to fly from the humiliations with which she was threatened? She had a vague notion (as indeed was intended) that this infamy might be the work of some of the servants, jealous of the affectionate deference shown her by Mademoiselle de Cardoville—and this thought filled her with despair. Those pages,—so

painfully confidential, which she would not have ventured to impart to the most tender and indulgent mother, because, written, as it were, with her heart's blood, they painted with too cruel a fidelity the thousand secret wounds of her soul,—those pages were to serve, perhaps served even now, for the jest and the laughing-stock of the lackeys of the mansion.

The money which accompanied this letter, and the insulting way in which it was offered, rather tended to confirm her suspicions. It was intended that the fear of misery should not be the obstacle of her leaving the house.

The workgirl's resolution was soon taken, with that calm and firm resignation which was familiar to her. She rose, with somewhat bright and haggard eyes, but without a tear in them. Since the day before, she had wept too much. With a trembling, icy hand, she wrote these words on a paper, which she left by the side of the bank-note:

"May Mademoiselle de Cardoville be blessed for all that she has done for me, and forgive me for having left her house, where I can remain no longer."

Having written this, Mother Bunch threw into the fire the infamous letter, which seemed to burn her hands. Then, taking a last look at her chamber, furnished so comfortably, she shuddered involuntarily as she thought of the misery that awaited her—a misery more frightful than that of which she had already been the victim, for Agricola's mother had departed with Gabriel, and the unfortunate girl could no longer, as formerly, be consoled in her distress by the almost maternal affection of Dagobert's wife.

To live alone—quite alone—with the thought that her fatal passion for Agricola was laughed at by everybody, perhaps even by himself—such were the future prospects of the hunchback. This future terrified her—a dark desire crossed her mind; she shuddered, and an expression of bitter joy contracted her features. Resolved to go, she made some steps toward the door, when, in passing before the fireplace, she saw her own image in the glass, pale as death, and clothed in black; then it struck her that she wore a dress which did not belong to her, and she remembered a passage in the letter which alluded to the rags she had on before she entered that house.

"True!" said she, with a heart-breaking smile, as she looked at her black garments; "they would call me a thief."

And, taking her candle, she entered the little dressing-room and put on again the poor, old clothes which she had preserved as a sort of pious remembrance of her misfortunes. Only at this instant did the tears flow

abundantly. She wept — not in sorrow at resuming the garb of misery, but in gratitude; for all the comforts around her, to which she was about to bid an eternal adieu, recalled to her mind at every step the delicacy and goodness of *Mademoiselle de Cardoville*; therefore, yielding to an almost involuntary impulse, after she had put on her poor, old clothes, she fell on her knees in the middle of the room, and, addressing herself in thought to *Mademoiselle de Cardoville*, she exclaimed, in a voice broken by convulsive sobs:

“Adieu! oh, forever, adieu! — You, that deigned to call me friend — and sister!”

Suddenly she rose in alarm; she heard steps in the corridor which led from the garden to one of the doors of her apartment, the other door opening into the parlor. It was *Florine*, who (alas! too late) was bringing back the manuscript. Alarmed at this noise of footsteps, and believing herself already the laughing-stock of the house, *Mother Bunch* rushed from the room, hastened across the parlor, gained the court-yard, and knocked at the window of the porter's lodge. The house-door opened, and immediately closed upon her. And so the workgirl left the *Hotel Cardoville*.

Adrienne was thus deprived of a devoted, faithful, and vigilant guardian.

Rodin was delivered from an active and sagacious antagonist, whom he had always, with good reason, feared. Having, as we have seen, guessed *Mother Bunch's* love for *Agricola*, and knowing her to be a poet, the Jesuit supposed, logically enough, that she must have written secretly some verses inspired by this fatal and concealed passion. Hence the order given to *Florine*, to try and discover some written evidence of this love; hence this letter, so horribly effective in its coarse ribaldry, of which, it must be observed, *Florine* did not know the contents, having received it after communicating a summary of the contents of the manuscript, which, the first time, she had only glanced through without taking it away.

We have said that *Florine*, yielding too late to a generous repentance, had reached *Mother Bunch's* apartment just as the latter quitted the house in consternation. Perceiving a light in the dressing-room, the waiting-maid hastened thither. She saw upon a chair the black dress that *Mother Bunch* had just taken off, and, a few steps farther, the shabby little trunk, open and empty, in which she had hitherto preserved her poor garments. *Florine's* heart sank within her; she ran to the secretary; the disorder of the card-board boxes, the note for five hundred francs left by the side of the two lines written to *Mademoiselle*

de Cardoville, all proved that her obedience to Rodin's orders had borne fatal fruit and that Mother Bunch had quitted the house forever. Finding the uselessness of her tardy resolution, Florine resigned herself with a sigh to the necessity of delivering the manuscript to Rodin. Then, forced by the fatality of her miserable position to console herself for evil by evil, she considered that the hunchback's departure would at least make her treachery less dangerous.

Two days after these events, Adrienne received the following note from Rodin, in answer to a letter she had written him, to inform him of the workgirl's inexplicable departure :

"MY DEAR YOUNG LADY :

"Obliged to set out this morning for the factory of the excellent M. Hardy, whither I am called by an affair of importance, it is impossible for me to pay you my humble respects. You ask me what I think of the disappearance of this poor girl? I really do not know. The future will, I doubt not, explain all to her advantage. Only remember what I told you at Dr. Baleinier's with regard to a *certain society* and its secret emissaries, with whom it has the art of surrounding those it wishes to keep a watch on. I accuse no one; but let us only recall facts. This poor girl accused me; and I am, as you know, the most faithful of your servants. She possessed nothing; and yet five hundred francs were found in her secretary. You loaded her with favors; and she leaves your house without even explaining the cause of this extraordinary flight. I draw no conclusion, my dear young lady; I am always unwilling to condemn without evidence; but reflect upon all this, and be on your guard, for you have perhaps escaped a great danger. Be more circumspect and suspicious than ever; such at least is the respectful advice of your most obedient, humble servant,

"RODIN."

PART XIV

THE FACTORY

CHAPTER I

THE TRYSTING-PLACE OF THE
"WOLVES"



It was a Sunday morning—the very day on which Mademoiselle de Cardoville had received Rodin's letter with regard to Mother Bunch's disappearance.

Two men were talking together, seated at a table in one of the public-houses in the little village of Villiers, situated at no great distance from M. Hardy's factory. The village was for the most part inhabited by quarrymen and stonecutters, employed in working the neighboring quarries. Nothing can be ruder and more laborious, and at the same time less adequately paid, than the work of this class of people. Therefore, as Agricola had told Mother Bunch, they drew painful comparisons between their condition, almost always miserable, and the comfort and comparative ease enjoyed by M. Hardy's workmen, thanks to his generous and intelligent management and to the principles of association and community which he had put in practice amongst them.

Misery and ignorance are always the cause of great evils. Misery is easily excited to anger, and ignorance soon yields to perfidious counsels. For a long time the happiness of M. Hardy's workmen had been naturally envied, but not with a jealousy amounting to hatred. As soon, however, as the secret enemies of the manufacturer, uniting with his rival, Baron Tripeaud, had an interest in changing this peaceful state of things, it changed accordingly.

With diabolical skill and perseverance they succeeded in kindling the most evil passions. By means of chosen emissaries they applied to those quarrymen and stonecutters of the neighborhood, whose bad conduct had aggravated their misery. Notorious for their turbulence, audacity, and energy, these men might exercise a dangerous influence on the majority of their companions, who were peaceful, laborious, and honest, but easily intimidated by violence. These turbulent leaders, previously embittered by misfortune, were soon impressed with an exaggerated idea of the happiness of M. Hardy's workmen, and excited to a jealous hatred of them. They went still farther; the incendiary sermons of an abbé, a member of the Company, who had come expressly from Paris to preach during Lent against M. Hardy, acted powerfully on the minds of the women who filled the church, while their husbands were haunting the taverns. Profiting by the growing fear which the approach of the cholera then inspired, the preacher struck with terror these weak and credulous imaginations by pointing to M. Hardy's factory as a center of corruption and damnation, capable of drawing down the vengeance of Heaven, and bringing the fatal scourge upon the country. Thus the men, already inflamed with envy, were still more excited by the incessant urgency of their wives, who, madened by the abbé's sermons, poured their curses on that band of atheists, who might bring down so many misfortunes upon them and their children. Some bad characters belonging to the factory of Baron Tripeaud, and paid by him,—for it was a great interest the honorable manufacturer had in the ruin of M. Hardy,—came to augment the general irritation, and to complete it by raising one of those alarming union questions, which in our day have unfortunately caused so much bloodshed.

Many of M. Hardy's workmen, before they entered his employ, had belonged to a society or union called the *Devourers*; while many of the stonecutters in the neighboring quarries belonged to a society called the *Wolves*. Now, for a long time an implacable rivalry had existed between the *Wolves* and *Devourers*, and brought about many sanguinary struggles, which are the more to be deplored, as in some respects the idea of these unions is excellent, being founded on the fruitful and mighty principle of association. But unfortunately, instead of embracing all trades in one fraternal communion, these unions break up the working-class into distinct and hostile societies, whose rivalry often leads to bloody collisions.

For the last week the *Wolves*, excited by so many different importunities, burned to discover an occasion or a pretext to come to blows with the *Devourers*; but the latter, not frequenting the public-houses, and hardly leaving the factory during the week, had hitherto rendered such a meeting impossible, and the *Wolves* had been forced to wait for

the Sunday with ferocious impatience. Moreover, a great number of the quarrymen and stonecutters, being peaceable and hard-working people, had refused, though *Wolves* themselves, to join this hostile mani-



festation against the *Devourers* of M. Hardy's factory; the leaders had been obliged to recruit their forces from the vagabonds and idlers of the barriers, whom the attraction of tumult and disorder had easily enlisted under the flag of the warlike *Wolves*.

Such, then, was the dull fermentation which agitated the little village of Villiers while the two men of whom we have spoken were at the table in the public-house.

These men had asked for a private room, that they might be alone. One of them was still young and pretty well dressed. But the disorder in his clothes, his loose cravat, his shirt spotted with wine, his disheveled hair, his look of fatigue, his marble complexion, his bloodshot eyes, announced that a night of debauch had preceded this morning; while his abrupt and heavy gesture, his hoarse voice, his look, sometimes brilliant and sometimes stupid, proved that to the last fumes of the intoxication of the night before were joined the first attacks of a new state of drunkenness.

The companion of this man said to him, as he touched his glass with his own :

“ Your health, my boy ! ”

“ Yours ! ” answered the young man ; “ though you look to me like the devil.”

“ I ! the devil ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Why ? ”

“ How did you come to know me ? ”

“ Do you repent that you ever knew me ? ”

“ Who told you that I was a prisoner at Sainte-Pélagie ? ”

“ Didn’t I take you out of prison ? ”

“ Why did you take me out ? ”

“ Because I have a good heart.”

“ You are very fond of me, perhaps—just as the butcher likes the ox that he drives to the slaughter-house.”

“ Are you mad ? ”

“ A man does not pay a hundred thousand francs for another without a motive.”

“ I have a motive.”

“ What is it ? what do you want to do with me ? ”

“ A jolly companion, that will spend his money like a man, and pass every night like the last. Good wine, good cheer, pretty girls, and gay songs. Is that such a bad trade ? ”

After he had remained a moment without answering, the young man replied with a gloomy air :

“ Why, on the eve of my leaving prison, did you attach this condition to my freedom, that I should write to my mistress to tell her that I would never see her again ? Why did you exact this letter from me ? ”

"A sigh! what, are you still thinking of her?"

"Always."

"You are wrong. Your mistress is far from Paris by this time. I saw her get into the stage-coach before I came to take you out of Sainte-Pélagie."

"Yes, I was stifled in that prison. To get out I would have given my soul to the devil. You thought so, and therefore you came to me; only, instead of my soul, you took Cephyse from me. Poor Bacchanal Queen! And why did you do it? Thousand thunders! Will you tell me?"

"A man as much attached to his mistress as you are is no longer a man. He wants energy, when the occasion requires."

"What occasion?"

"Let us drink!"

"You make me drink too much brandy."

"Bah! look at me!"

"That's what frightens me. It seems something devilish. A bottle of brandy does not even make you wink. You must have a stomach of iron and a head of marble."

"I have long traveled in Russia. There we drink to roast ourselves."

"And here to only warm. So, let's drink, but wine."

"Nonsense! wine is fit for children; brandy for men like us!"

"Well, then, brandy; but it burns and sets the head on fire, and then we see all the flames of hell!"

"That's how I like to see you, hang it!"

"But when you told me that I was too much attached to my mistress, and that I should want energy when the occasion required, of what occasion did you speak?"

"Let us drink!"

"Stop a moment, comrade. I am no more of a fool than others. Your half words have taught me something."

"Well, what?"

"You know that I have been a workman, that I have many companions, and that, being a good fellow, I am much liked amongst them. You want me for a catspaw to catch other chestnuts?"

"What then?"

"You must be some getter-up of riots; some speculator in revolts."

"What next?"

"You are traveling for some anonymous society that trades in musket-shots."

"Are you a coward?"

"I burned powder in July, I can tell you—make no mistakes!"

"You would not mind burning some again?"

"Just as well that sort of fireworks as any other. Only I find revolutions more agreeable than useful; all that I got from the barricades of the three days was burnt breeches and a lost jacket; that's all the cause won by me, with its 'Forward! March!'"

"You know many of Hardy's workmen?"

"Oh! that's why you have brought me down here?"

"Yes; you will meet with many of the workmen from the factory"

"Men from Hardy's take part in a row? No, no; they are too well off for that. You have been sold."

"You will see presently."

"I tell you they are well off. What have they to complain of?"

"What of their brethren — those who have not so good a master, and die of hunger and misery, and call on them for assistance? Do you think they will remain deaf to such a summons? Hardy is only an exception. Let the people but give a good pull all together, and the exception will become the rule, and all the world be happy"

"What you say there is true; but it would be a devil of a pull that would make an honest man out of my old master, Baron Tripeaud, who made me what I am — an out-and-out rip."

"Hardy's workmen are coming: you are their comrade, and have no interest in deceiving them. They will believe you. Join with me in persuading them —"

"To what?"

"To leave this factory, in which they grow effeminate and selfish and forget their brothers."

"But if they leave the factory, how are they to live?"

"We will provide for that, on the great day."

"And what's to be done till then?"

"What you have done last night: drink, laugh, sing, and, by way of work, exercise themselves privately in the use of arms."

"Who will bring these workmen here?"

"Some one has already spoken to them. They have had printed papers reproaching them with indifference to their brothers. Come, will you support me?"

"I'll support you — the more readily as I cannot very well support myself! I only cared for Cephyse in the world; I know that I am on a bad road; you are pushing me on farther; let the ball roll! Whether we go to the devil one way or the other is not of much consequence. Let's drink!"

"Drink to our next night's fun; the last was only apprenticeship."

"Of what, then, are you made? I looked at you, and never saw you

either blush or smile or change countenance. You are like a man of iron."

"I am not a lad of fifteen. It would take something more to make me laugh. I shall laugh to-night."

"I don't know if it's the brandy; but devil take me if you don't frighten me when you say that you shall laugh to-night!"

So saying, the young man rose, staggering; he began to be once more intoxicated.

There was a knock at the door.

"Come in!"

The host made his appearance.

"What's the matter?"

"There's a young man below, who calls himself Olivier. He asks for M. Morok."

"That's right. Let him come up."

The host went out.

"It is one of our men, but he is alone," said Morok, whose savage countenance expressed disappointment. "It astonishes me, for I expected a good number. Do you know him?"

"Olivier? Yes; a fair chap, I think."

"We shall see him directly Here he is."

A young man, with an open, bold, intelligent countenance, at this moment entered the room.

"What! old Sleepinbuff!" he exclaimed at sight of Morok's companion.

"Myself! I have not seen you for an age, Olivier."

"Simple enough, my boy. We do not work at the same place."

"But you are alone!" cried Morok; and pointing to Sleepinbuff, he added: "You may speak before him; he is one of us. But why are you alone?"

"I come alone, but in the name of my comrades."

"Oh!" said Morok, with a sigh of satisfaction, "they consent."

"They refuse; just as I do!"

"What, the devil! they refuse? Have they no more courage than women?" cried Morok, grinding his teeth with rage.

"Hark ye," answered Olivier coolly. "We have received your letters and seen your agent. We have had proof that he is really connected with great societies, many members of which are known to us."

"Well! why do you hesitate?"

"First of all, nothing proves that these societies are ready to make a movement."

"I tell you they are."

"He — tells you — they are," said Sleepinbuff, stammering; "and I (*hic!*) affirm it. Forward! March!"

"That's not enough," replied Olivier. "Besides, we have reflected upon it. For a week the factory was divided. Even yesterday the discussion was too warm to be pleasant. But this morning Father Simon called us to him; we explained ourselves fully before him, and he brought us all to one mind. We mean to wait, and if any disturbance breaks out, we shall see."

"Is that your final word?"

"It is our last word."

"Silence!" cried Sleepinbuff suddenly, as he listened, balancing himself on his tottering legs. "It is like the noise of a crowd not far off."

A dull sound was indeed audible, which became every moment more and more distinct, and at length grew formidable.

"What is that?" said Olivier, in surprise.

"Now," replied Morok, smiling with a sinister air, "I remember the host told me there was a great ferment in the village against the factory. If you and your other comrades had separated from Hardy's other workmen, as I hoped, these people who are beginning to howl would have been *for* you instead of against you."

"This was a trap, then, to set one-half of M. Hardy's workmen against the other!" cried Olivier; "you hoped that we should make common cause with these people against the factory, and that —"

The young man had not time to finish. A terrible outburst of shouts, howls, and hisses shook the tavern.

At the same instant the door was abruptly opened, and the host, pale and trembling, hurried into the chamber, exclaiming:

"Gentlemen! do any of you work at M. Hardy's factory?"

"I do," said Olivier.

"Then you are lost. Here are the *Wolves* in a body, saying there are *Devourers* here from M. Hardy's, and offering them battle, unless the *Devourers* will give up the factory and range themselves on their side."

"It was a trap, there can be no doubt of it!" cried Olivier, looking at Morok and Sleepinbuff with a threatening air; "if my mates had come we were all to be let in."

"I lay a trap, Olivier?" stammered Jacques Rennepont. "Never!"

"Battle to the *Devourers*! or let them join the *Wolves*!" cried the angry crowd with one voice, as they appeared to invade the house.

"Come!" exclaimed the host. Without giving Olivier time to answer, he seized him by the arm, and opening a window which led to a roof at no very great height from the ground, he said to him:

“Make your escape by this window, let yourself slide down, and gain the fields; it is time.”

As the young workman hesitated, the host added, with a look of terror :



“Alone, against a couple of hundred, what can you do? A minute more and you are lost. Do you not hear them? They have entered the yard; they are coming up.”

Indeed, at this moment, the groans, hisses, and cheers redoubled in violence; the wooden staircase which led to the first story shook beneath the quick steps of many persons, and the shout arose, loud and piercing:

“Battle to the *Devourers*!”

“Fly, Olivier!” cried Sleepinbuff, almost sobered by the danger.

Hardly had he pronounced the words when the door of the large room, which communicated with the small one in which they were, was burst open with a frightful crash.

“Here they are!” cried the host, clasping his hands in alarm.

Then, running to Olivier, he pushed him, as it were, out of the window; for, with one foot on the sill, the workman still hesitated.

The window once closed, the publican turned toward Morok the instant the latter entered the large room into which the leaders of the *Wolves* had just forced an entry, while their companions were vociferating in the yard and on the staircase. Eight or ten of these madmen, urged by others to take part in these scenes of disorder, had rushed first into the room, with countenances inflamed by wine and anger; most of them were armed with long sticks. A blaster, of Herculean strength and stature, with an old red handkerchief about his head, its ragged ends streaming over his shoulders, miserably dressed in a half-worn goat-skin, brandished an iron drilling-rod, and appeared to direct the movements. With bloodshot eyes, threatening and ferocious countenance, he advanced toward the small room as if to drive back Morok, and exclaimed, in a voice of thunder:

“Where are the *Devourers*? The *Wolves* will eat ’em up!”

The host hastened to open the door of the small room, saying:

“There is no one here, my friends; no one. Look for yourselves.”

“It is true,” said the quarryman, surprised, after peeping into the room; “where are they, then? We were told there were a dozen of them here. They should have marched with us against the factory, or there’d ’a’ been a battle, and the *Wolves* would have tried their teeth!”

“If they have not come,” said another, “they will come. Let’s wait.”

“Yes, yes; we will wait for them.”

“We will look close at each other.”

“If the *Wolves* want to see the *Devourers*,” said Morok, “why not go and howl round the factory of the miscreant atheists? At the first howl of the *Wolves* they will come out and give you battle.”

“They will give you—battle,” repeated Sleepinbuff mechanically.

“Unless the *Wolves* are afraid of the *Devourers*,” added Morok.

“Since you talk of fear, you shall go with us, and see who’s afraid!” cried the formidable blaster, in a thundering voice, as he advanced toward Morok.

A number of voices joined in with :

“ Who says the *Wolves* are afraid of the *Devourers* ? ”

“ It would be the first time ! ”

“ Battle ! battle ! and make an end of it ! ”

“ We are tired of all this. Why should we be so miserable and they so well off ? ”

“ They have said that quarrymen are brutes, only fit to turn wheels in a shaft, like dogs to turn spits,” cried an emissary of Baron Tripeaud’s.

“ And that the *Devourers* would make themselves caps with wolf-skin,” added another.

“ Neither they nor their wives ever go to mass. They are pagans and dogs ! ” cried an emissary of the preaching abbé.

“ The men might keep their Sundays as they pleased ; but their wives not to go to mass ! It is abominable.”

“ And, therefore, the curate has said that their factory, because of its abominations, might bring down the cholera on the country ”

“ True ! he said that in his sermon.”

“ Our wives heard it.”

“ Yes, yes ; down with the *Devourers*, who want to bring the cholera on the country ! ”

“ Hooray for a fight ! ” cried the crowd in chorus.

“ To the factory, my brave *Wolves* ! ” cried Morok, with the voice of a Stentor ; “ on to the factory ! ”

“ Yes ! to the factory ! to the factory ! ” repeated the crowd, with furious stamping ; for little by little, all who could force their way into the room or up the stairs had there collected together.

These furious cries, recalling Jacques for a moment to his senses, he whispered to Morok :

“ It is slaughter you would provoke ! I wash my hands of it.”

“ We shall have time to let them know at the factory. We can give these fellows the slip on the road,” answered Morok.

Then he cried aloud, addressing the host, who was terrified at this disorder :

“ Brandy ! Let us drink to the health of the brave *Wolves* ! I will stand treat.”

He threw some money to the host, who disappeared and soon returned with several bottles of brandy and some glasses.

“ What ! glasses ? ” cried Morok. “ Do jolly companions, like we are, drink out of glasses ! ”

So saying, he forced out one of the corks, raised the neck of the bottle to his lips, and, having drunk a deep draught, passed it to the gigantic quarryman.

"That's the thing!" said the latter. "Here's in honor of the treat! None but a sneak will refuse, for this stuff will sharpen the *Wolves'* teeth!"

"Here's to your health, mates!" said Morok, distributing the bottles.

"There will be blood at the end of all this," muttered Sleepinbuff, who, in spite of his intoxication, perceived all the danger of these fatal incitements.

Indeed, a large portion of the crowd was already quitting the yard of the public-house, and advancing rapidly toward M. Hardy's factory.

Those of the workmen and inhabitants of the village who had not chosen to take any part in this movement of hostility (they were the majority) did not make their appearance as this threatening troop passed along the principal street; but a good number of women, excited to fanaticism by the sermons of the abbé, encouraged the warlike assemblage with their cries. At the head of the troop advanced the gigantic blaster, brandishing his formidable bar, followed by a motley mass, armed with sticks and stones. Their heads still warmed by their recent libations of brandy, they had now attained a frightful state of frenzy. Their countenances were ferocious, inflamed, terrible. This unchaining of the worst passions seemed to forebode the most deplorable consequences. Holding each other arm-in-arm, and walking four or five together, the *Wolves* gave vent to their excitement in war-songs, which closed with the following verse:

"Forward! full of assurance!
Let us try our vigorous arms!
They have wearied out our prudence;
Let us show we've no alarms.
Sprung from a monarch glorious,
To-day we'll not grow pale,
Whether we win the fight, or fail,
Whether we die, or are victorious!
Children of Solomon, mighty king,
All your efforts together bring,
Till in triumph we shall sing!"

.

Morok and Jacques had disappeared while the tumultuous troop were leaving the tavern to hasten to the factory.

CHAPTER II

THE COMMON DWELLING-HOUSE



WHILE the *Wolves*, as we have just seen, prepared a savage attack on the *Devourers*, the factory of M. Hardy had that morning a festal air, perfectly in accordance with the serenity of the sky; for the wind was from the north, and pretty sharp for a fine day in March. The clock had just struck nine in the common dwelling-house of the workmen, separated from the workshops by a broad path planted with trees. The rising sun bathed in light this imposing mass of buildings, situated a league from Paris, in a gay and salubrious locality, from which were visible the woody and picturesque hills that on this side overlook the great city. Nothing could be plainer and yet more cheerful than the aspect of the common dwelling-house of the workmen. Its slanting roof of red tiles projected over white walls, divided here and there by broad rows of bricks, which contrasted agreeably with the green color of the blinds on the first and second stories.

These buildings, open to the south and east, were surrounded by a large garden of about ten acres partly planted with trees and partly laid out in fruit and kitchen garden.

Before continuing this description, which perhaps will appear a little like a fairy-tale, let us begin by saying that the wonders of which we are about to present the sketch must not be considered Utopian dreams; nothing, on the contrary, could be of a more positive character, and we are able to assert, and even to prove (what in our time is of great weight and interest), that these wonders were the result of an excellent speculation and represented an investment as lucrative as it was secure. To undertake a vast, noble, and most useful enterprise; to bestow on a considerable number of human creatures an ideal prosperity compared with the frightful, almost homicidal, doom to which they are generally condemned; to instruct them, and elevate them in their own esteem; to make them prefer to the coarse pleasures of the tavern, or rather to

the fatal oblivion which they find there as an escape from the consciousness of their deplorable destiny, the pleasures of the intellect and the enjoyments of art,—in a word, to make men moral by making them happy; and finally, thanks to this generous example, so easy of imitation, to take a place among the benefactors of humanity, and yet, at the same time, to do, as it were, without knowing it, an excellent stroke of business, may appear fabulous. And yet this was the secret of the wonders of which we speak.

Let us enter the interior of the factory

Ignorant of Mother Bunch's cruel disappearance, Agricola gave himself up to the most happy thoughts as he recalled Angela's image, and having finished dressing with unusual care, went in search of his betrothed.

Let us say two words on the subject of the lodging which the smith occupied in the common dwelling-house at the incredibly low rate of seventy-five francs per annum, like the other bachelors on the establishment. This lodging, situated on the second story, was comprised of a capital chamber and bedroom, with a southern aspect and looking on the garden; the pine floor was perfectly white and clean; the iron bedstead was supplied with a good mattress and warm coverings; a gas-burner and a warm-air pipe were also introduced into the rooms to furnish light and heat as required; the walls were hung with pretty fancy papering, and had curtains to match; a chest of drawers, a walnut table, a few chairs, a small library, comprised Agricola's furniture. Finally, in the large and light closet, were a place for his clothes, a dressing-table, and a large zinc basin with an ample supply of water. If we compare this agreeable, salubrious, comfortable lodging with the dark, icy, dilapidated garret for which the worthy fellow paid ninety francs at his mother's, and to get to which he had more than a league and a half to go every evening, we shall understand the sacrifice he made to his affection for that excellent woman.

Agricola, after casting a last glance of tolerable satisfaction at his looking-glass while he combed his mustache and imperial, quitted his chamber to go and join Angela in the women's workroom. The corridor along which he had to pass was broad, well lighted from above, floored with pine, and extremely clean. Notwithstanding some seeds of discord which had been lately sown by M. Hardy's enemies amongst his workmen, until now so fraternally united, joyous songs were heard in almost all the apartments which skirted the corridor, and as Agricola passed before several open doors he exchanged a cordial good-morrow with many of his comrades. The smith hastily descended the stairs,

crossed the court-yard, in which was a grass-plot planted with trees, with a fountain in the center, and gained the other wing of the building. There was the workroom in which a portion of the wives and daughters of the associated artisans who happened not to be employed in the factory occupied themselves in making up the linen. This labor, joined to the enormous saving effected by the purchase of the materials wholesale, reduced to an incredible extent the price of each article. After passing through this workroom, a vast apartment looking on the garden, well aired in summer and well warmed in winter, Agricola knocked at the door of the rooms occupied by Angela's mother.

If we say a few words with regard to this lodging, situated on the first story, with an eastern aspect, and also looking on the garden, it is that we may take it as a specimen of the habitation of a family in this association, supplied at the incredibly small price of one hundred and twenty-five francs per annum.

A small entrance opening on the corridor led to a large room, on each side of which was a smaller chamber destined for the family, when the boys and girls were too big to continue to sleep in the two dormitories, arranged after the fashion of a large school, and reserved for the children of both sexes. Every night the superintendence of these dormitories was intrusted to a father and mother of a family belonging to the association. The lodging of which we speak being, like all the others, disencumbered of the paraphernalia of a kitchen,—for the cooking was done in common, and on a large scale, in another part of the building,—was kept extremely clean. A pretty large piece of carpet, a comfortable arm-chair, some pretty-looking china on a stand of well-polished wood, some prints hung against the walls, a clock of gilt bronze, a bed, a chest of drawers, and a mahogany secretary announced that the inhabitants of this apartment enjoyed not only the necessities, but some of the luxuries of life.

Angela, who from this time might be called Agricola's betrothed, justified in every point the flattering portrait which the smith had drawn of her in his interview with poor Mother Bunch. The charming girl, seventeen years of age at most, dressed with as much simplicity as neatness, was seated by the side of her mother. When Agricola entered she blushed slightly at seeing him.

"Mademoiselle," said Agricola, "I have come to keep my promise, if your mother has no objection."

"Certainly, M. Agricola," answered the mother of the young girl cordially. "She would not go over the common dwelling-house with her father, her brother, or me, because she wished to have that pleasure with you to-day. It is quite right that you who can talk so well should

do the honors of the house to the new-comer. She has been waiting for you an hour, and with such impatience!"

"Pray excuse me, mademoiselle," said Agricola gayly; "in thinking of the pleasure of seeing you I forgot the hour. That is my only excuse."

"Oh, mother!" said the young girl, in a tone of mild reproach, and becoming red as a cherry, "why did you say that?"

"Is it true, yes or no? I do not blame you for it; on the contrary. Go with M. Agricola, child, and he will tell you, better than I can, what all the workmen of the factory owe to M. Hardy"

"M. Agricola," said Angela, tying the ribbons of her pretty cap, "what a pity that your good little adopted sister is not with us."

"Mother Bunch?—yes, you are right, mademoiselle: but that is only a pleasure put off, and the visit she paid us yesterday will not be the last."

Having embraced her mother, the girl took Agricola's arm and they went out together.

"Dear me, M. Agricola!" said Angela; "if you knew how much I was surprised on entering this fine house, after being accustomed to see so much misery amongst the poor workmen in our country, and in which I too have had my share, while here everybody seems happy and contented. It is really like fairy-land; I think I am in a dream, and when I ask my mother the explanation of these wonders, she tells me, 'M. Agricola will explain it all to you.'"

"Do you know why I am so happy to undertake that delightful task, mademoiselle?" said Agricola, with an accent at once grave and tender. "Nothing could be more in season."

"Why so, M. Agricola?"

"Because to show you this house, to make you acquainted with all the resources of our association, is to be able to say to you: 'Here, the workman, sure of the present, sure of the future, is not, like so many of his poor brothers, obliged to renounce the sweetest want of the heart—the desire of choosing a companion for life—in the fear of uniting misery to misery.'"

Angela cast down her eyes and blushed.

"Here the workman may safely yield to the hope of knowing the sweet joys of a family, sure of not having his heart torn hereafter by the sight of the horrible privations of those who are dear to him; here, thanks to order and industry and the wise employment of the strength of all, men, women, and children live happy and contented. In a word, to explain all this to you, mademoiselle," added Agricola, smiling with a still more tender air, "is to prove that here we can do nothing more reasonable than love, nothing wiser than marry"

"M. Agricola," answered Angela, in a slightly agitated voice, and blushing still more as she spoke, "suppose we were to begin our walk."

"Directly, mademoiselle," replied the smith, pleased at the trouble he had excited in that ingenuous soul. "But, come; we are near the dor-



mitory of the little girls. The chirping birds have long left their nests. Let us go there."

"Willingly, M. Agricola."

The young smith and Angela soon entered a spacious dormitory,

resembling that of a first-rate boarding-school. The little iron bedsteads were arranged in symmetrical order; at each end were the beds of the two mothers of families, who took the superintendence by turns.

"Dear me! how well it is arranged, M. Agricola; and how neat and clean! Who is it that takes such good care of it?"

"The children themselves; we have no servants here. There is an extraordinary emulation between these urchins, as to who shall make her bed most neatly, and it amuses them quite as much as making a bed for their dolls. Little girls, you know, delight in playing at keeping house. Well, here they play at it in good earnest, and the house is admirably kept in consequence."

"Oh! I understand. They turn to account their natural taste for all such kinds of amusement."

"That is the whole secret. You will see them everywhere usefully occupied, and delighted at the importance of the employments given them."

"Oh, M. Agricola!" said Angela timidly, "only compare these fine dormitories, so warm and healthy, with the horrible icy garrets, where children are heaped pell-mell on a wretched straw mattress, shivering with cold, as is the case with almost all the workmen's families in our country!"

"And in Paris, mademoiselle, it is even worse."

"Oh! how kind, generous, and rich must M. Hardy be to spend so much money in doing good!"

"I am going to astonish you, mademoiselle!" said Agricola, with a smile; "to astonish you so much that perhaps you will not believe me."

"Why so, M. Agricola?"

"There is not certainly in the world a man with a better and more generous heart than M. Hardy; he does good for its own sake, and without thinking of his personal interest. And yet, Mademoiselle Angela, were he the most selfish and avaricious of men, he would still find it greatly to his advantage to put us in a position to be as comfortable as we are."

"Is it possible, M. Agricola? You tell me so, and I believe it; but if good can so easily be done, if there is even an advantage in doing it, why is it not more commonly attempted?"

"Ah! mademoiselle, it requires three gifts very rarely met with in the same person—knowledge, power, and will."

"Alas! yes. Those who have the knowledge have not the power."

"And those who have the power have neither the knowledge nor the will."

"But how does M. Hardy find any advantage in the good he does for you?"

"I will explain that presently, mademoiselle."

"Oh, what a nice, sweet smell of fruit!" said Angela suddenly

"Our common fruit-store is close at hand. I wager we shall find there some of the little birds from the dormitory—not occupied in picking and stealing, but hard at work."

Opening a door, Agricola led Angela into a large room furnished with shelves, on which the winter fruits were arranged in order. A number of children, from seven to eight years old, neatly and warmly clad, and glowing with health, exerted themselves cheerfully, under the superintendence of a woman, in separating and sorting the spoilt fruit.

"You see," said Agricola, "wherever it is possible, we make use of the children. These occupations are amusements for them, answering to the need of movement and activity natural to their age; and, in this way, we can employ the grown girls and the women to much better advantage."

"True, M. Agricola; how well it is all arranged."

"And if you saw what services the urchins in the kitchen render! Directed by one or two women, they do the work of eight or ten servants."

"In fact," said Angela, smiling, "at their age we like so much to play at cooking dinner. They must be delighted."

"And, in the same way, under pretext of playing at gardening, they weed the ground, gather the fruit and vegetables, water the flowers, roll the paths, and so on. In a word, this army of infant workers, who generally remain till ten or twelve years of age without being of any service, are here very useful. Except three hours of school, which is quite sufficient for them, from the age of six or seven their recreations are turned to good account, and the dear little creatures, by the saving of full-grown arms which they effect, actually gain more than they cost; and then, mademoiselle, do you not think there is something in the presence of childhood thus mixed up with every labor—something mild, pure, almost sacred, which has its influence on our words and actions, and imposes a salutary reserve? The coarsest man will respect the presence of children."

"The more one reflects, the more one sees that everything here is really designed for the happiness of all!" said Angela, in admiration.

"It has not been done without trouble. It was necessary to conquer prejudices and break through customs. But see, Mademoiselle Angela! here we are at the kitchen," added the smith, smiling; "is it not as imposing as that of a barrack or a public school?"

Indeed, the culinary department of the common dwelling-house was immense. All its utensils were bright and clean; and, thanks to

the marvelous and economical inventions of modern science (which are always beyond the reach of the poorer classes, to whom they are most necessary, because they can only be practiced on a large scale), not only the fire on the hearth and in the stoves was fed with half the quantity of fuel that would have been consumed by each family individually, but the excess of the caloric sufficed, with the aid of well-constructed tubes, to spread a mild and equal warmth through all parts of the house. And here, also, children, under the direction of two women, rendered numerous services. Nothing could be more comic than the serious manner in which they performed their culinary functions; it was the same with the assistance they gave in the bakehouse, where, at an extraordinary saving in the price (for they bought flour wholesale), they made an excellent *household bread*, composed of pure wheat and rye, so preferable to that whiter bread, which too often owes its apparent qualities to some deleterious substance.

"Good-day, Dame Bertrand," said Agricola gayly, to a worthy matron who was gravely contemplating the slow evolution of several spits worthy of Gamacho's Wedding, so heavily were they laden with pieces of beef, mutton, and veal, which began to assume a fine golden-brown color of the most attractive kind; "good-day, Dame Bertrand. According to the rule, I do not pass the threshold of the kitchen; I only wish it to be admired by this young lady, who is a new-comer amongst us."

"Admire, my lad, pray admire; and above all take notice how good these brats are and how well they work."

So saying, the matron pointed with the long ladle, which served her as a scepter, to some fifteen children of both sexes seated round a table and deeply absorbed in the exercise of their functions, which consisted in peeling potatoes and picking herbs.

"We are, I see, to have a downright Belshazzar's feast, Dame Bertrand?" said Agricola, laughing.

"Faith! a feast like we have always, my lad. Here is our bill of fare for to-day,—a good vegetable soup, roast beef with potatoes, salad, fruit, cheese; and for extras, it being Sunday, some currant tarts made by Mother Denis at the bakehouse, where the oven is heating now."

"What you tell me, Dame Bertrand, gives me a furious appetite," said Agricola gayly. "One soon knows when it is *your* turn in the kitchen," added he, with a flattering air.

"Get along, do!" said the female *chef* on service, merrily.

"What astonishes me so much, M. Agricola," said Angela, as they continued their walk, "is the comparison of the insufficient, unwholesome food of the workmen in our country, with that which is provided here."

"And yet we do not spend more than twenty-five sous a day for much better food than we should get for three francs in Paris."

"But really, it is hard to believe, M. Agricola. How is it possible?"

"It is thanks to the magic wand of M. Hardy. I will explain it all presently."

"Oh! how impatient I am to see M. Hardy."

"You will soon see him — perhaps to-day; for he is expected every moment. But here is the refectory, which you do not yet know, as your family, like many others, prefer dining at home. See what a fine room looking out on the garden, just opposite the fountain!"

It was indeed a vast hall, built in the form of a gallery, with ten windows opening on the garden. Tables covered with shining oil-cloth were ranged along the walls, so that in winter this apartment served in the evening, after work, as a place of meeting for those who preferred to pass an hour together instead of remaining alone or with their families. Then, in this large hall, well warmed and brilliantly lighted with gas, some read, some played cards, some talked, and some occupied themselves with easy work.

"That is not all," said Agricola to the young girl; "I am sure you will like this apartment still better when I tell you that on Thursdays and Sundays we make a ball-room of it, and on Tuesdays and Saturdays a concert-room."

"Really!"

"Yes," continued the smith proudly, "we have amongst us musicians quite capable of tempting us to dance. Moreover, twice a week, nearly all of us sing in chorus — men, women, and children. Unfortunately, this week, some disputes that have arisen in the factory have prevented our concerts."

"So many voices! that must be superb."

"It is very fine, I assure you. M. Hardy has always encouraged this amusement among us, which has, he says, — and he is right, — so powerful an effect on the mind and the manners. One winter he sent for two pupils of the celebrated Wilhelm, and since then our school has made great progress. I assure you, Mademoiselle Angela, that, without flattering ourselves, there is something truly exciting in the sound of two hundred voices, singing in chorus some hymn to Labor or Freedom. You shall hear it, and you will, I think, acknowledge that there is something great and elevating in the heart of man, in this fraternal harmony of voices, blending in one grave, sonorous, imposing sound."

"Oh! I believe it. But what happiness to inhabit here. It is a life of joy; for labor, mixed with recreation, becomes itself a pleasure."

"Alas! here, as everywhere, there are tears and sorrows," replied

Agricola sadly "Do you see that isolated building, in a very exposed situation?"

"Yes; what is it?"

"That is our hospital for the sick. Happily, thanks to our healthy mode of life, it is not often full; an annual subscription enables us to have a good doctor. Moreover, a mutual benefit society is arranged in such a manner amongst us, that any one of us, in case of illness, receives two-thirds of what he would have gained in health."

"How well it is all managed! And there, M. Agricola, on the other side of the grass-plot?"

"That is the wash-house, with water laid on, cold and hot; and under yonder shed is the drying-place; farther on you see the stables and the lofts and granaries for the provender of the factory horses."

"But, M. Agricola, will you tell me the secret of all these wonders?"

"In ten minutes you shall understand it all, mademoiselle."

Unfortunately, Angela's curiosity was for a while disappointed. The girl was now standing with Agricola close to the iron gate, which shut in the garden from the broad avenue that separated the factory from the common dwelling-house. Suddenly the wind brought from the distance the sound of trumpets and military music; then was heard the gallop of two horses, approaching rapidly, and soon after a general officer made his appearance, mounted on a fine black charger, with a long flowing tail and crimson housings; he wore cavalry boots and white breeches, after the fashion of the empire; his uniform glittered with gold embroidery, the red ribbon of the Legion of Honor was passed over his right epaulet, with its four silver stars, and his hat had a broad gold border, and was crowned with a white plume, the distinctive sign reserved for the marshals of France. No warrior could have had a more martial and chivalrous air, or have sat more proudly on his war-horse. At the moment Marshal Simon—for it was he—arrived opposite the place where Angela and Agricola were standing, he drew up his horse suddenly, sprang lightly to the ground, and threw the golden reins to a servant in livery who followed also on horseback.

"Where shall I wait for your grace?" asked the groom.

"At the end of the avenue," said the marshal.

And uncovering his head respectfully, he advanced hastily with his hat in his hand to meet a person whom Angela and Agricola had not previously perceived. This person soon appeared at a turn of the avenue; he was an old man, with an energetic, intelligent countenance. He wore a very neat blouse, and a cloth cap over his long, white hair. With his hands in his pockets, he was quietly smoking an old meer-schaum pipe.

"Good-morning, father," said the marshal respectfully, as he affectionately embraced the old workman, who, having tenderly returned the pressure, said to him :

"Put on your hat, my boy But how gay we are!" added he, with a smile.

"I have just been to a review, father, close by ; and I took the opportunity to call on you as soon as possible."

"But shall I then not see my granddaughters to-day, as I do every Sunday ?"

"They are coming in a carriage, father, and Dagobert accompanies them."

"But what is the matter ? you appear full of thought."

"Indeed, father," said the marshal, with a somewhat agitated air, "I have serious things to talk about."

"Come in, then," said the old man, with some anxiety The marshal and his father disappeared at the turn of the avenue.

Angela had been struck with amazement at seeing this brilliant general, who was entitled "your grace," salute an old workman in a blouse as his father ; and, looking at Agricola with a confused air, she said to him :

"What, M. Agricola ! this old workman ——"

"Is the father of Marshal Duke de Ligny — the friend — yes, I may say the friend," added Agricola, with emotion, "of my father, who for twenty years served under him in war."

"To be placed so high, and yet to be so respectful and tender to his father!" said Angela. "The marshal must have a very noble heart ; but why does he let his father remain a workman ?"

"Because Father Simon will not quit his trade and the factory for anything in the world. He was born a workman, and he will die a workman, though he is the father of a duke and marshal of France."

CHAPTER III

THE SECRET



WHEN the very natural astonishment which the arrival of Marshal Simon had caused in Angela had passed away, Agricola said to her, with a smile :

“ I do not wish to take advantage of this circumstance, Mademoiselle Angela, to spare you the account of the secret by which all the wonders of our common dwelling-house are brought to pass.”

“ Oh ! I should not have let you forget your promise, M. Agricola,” answered Angela ; “ what you have already told me interests me too much for that.”

“ Listen, then. M. Hardy, like a true magician, has pronounced three cabalistic words : ASSOCIATION — COMMUNITY — FRATERNITY. We have understood the sense of these words, and the wonders you have seen have sprung from them, to our great advantage ; and also, I repeat, to the great advantage of M. Hardy ”

“ It is that which appears so extraordinary, M. Agricola.”

“ Suppose, mademoiselle, that M. Hardy, instead of being what he is, had only been a cold-hearted speculator, looking merely to the profit, and saying to himself : ‘ To make the most of my factory, what is needed ? Good work ; great economy in the raw material ; full employment of the workman’s time,— in a word, cheapness of manufacture in order to produce cheaply — excellence of the thing produced in order to sell dear ? ’ ”

“ Truly, M. Agricola, no manufacturer could desire more.”

“ Well, mademoiselle, these conditions might have been fulfilled, as they have been, but how ? Had M. Hardy only been a speculator, he might have said : ‘ At a distance from my factory, my workmen might have trouble to get there ; rising earlier, they will sleep less ; it is a bad economy to take from the sleep so necessary to those who toil. When they get feeble, the work suffers for it ; then the inclemency of the

inconvenience. Let us make the calculation. In Paris the married workman pays about two hundred and fifty francs a year for one or two wretched rooms and a closet, dark, small, unhealthy, in a narrow, miserable street; there he lives pell-mell with his family. What ruined constitutions are the consequence! and what sort of work can you expect from a feverish and diseased creature? As for the single men, they pay, for a smaller and quite as unwholesome lodging, about one hundred and fifty francs a year. Now, let us make the addition. I employ one hundred and forty-six married workmen who pay together, for their wretched holes, thirty-six thousand five hundred francs; I employ also one hundred and fifteen bachelors, who pay at the rate of seventeen thousand two hundred and eighty francs: the total will amount to about fifty thousand francs per annum, the interest on a million.’”

“Dear me, M. Agricola! what a sum to be produced by uniting all these little rents together!”

“You see, mademoiselle, that fifty thousand francs a year is a millionaire’s rent. Now, what says our speculator: ‘To induce our workmen to leave Paris, I will offer them enormous advantages. I will reduce their rent one-half, and, instead of small, unwholesome rooms, they shall have large, airy apartments, well warmed and lighted, at a trifling charge. Thus, one hundred and forty-six families, paying me only one hundred and twenty-five francs a year, and one hundred and fifteen bachelors seventy-five francs, I shall have a total of twenty-six to twenty-seven thousand francs. Now, a building large enough to hold all these people would cost me at most five hundred thousand francs. I shall then have invested my money at five per cent, at the least, and with perfect security, since the wages is a guarantee for the payment of the rent.’”

“Ah, M. Agricola! I begin to understand how it may sometimes be advantageous to do good, even in a pecuniary sense.”

“And I am almost certain, mademoiselle, that, in the long run, affairs conducted with uprightness and honesty turn out well. But to return to our speculator. ‘Here,’ will he say, ‘are my workmen, living close to my factory, well lodged, well warmed, and arriving always fresh at their work. That is not all; the English workman, who eats good beef and drinks good beer, does twice as much, in the same time, as the French workman, reduced to a detestable kind of food, rather weakening than the reverse, thanks to the poisonous adulteration of the articles he consumes. My workmen will then labor much better, if they eat much better. How shall I manage it without loss? Now I think of it, what is the food in barracks, schools, even prisons? Is it not the union of individual resources which procures an amount of comfort impossible

to realize without such an association? Now, if my two hundred and sixty workmen, instead of cooking two hundred and sixty detestable dinners, were to unite to prepare one good dinner for all of them, which might be done, thanks to the savings of all sorts that would ensue, what an advantage for me and them! Two or three women, aided by children, would suffice to make ready the daily repasts; instead of buying wood and charcoal in fractions, and so paying for it double its value, the association of my workmen would, upon my security,—their wages would be a sufficient security for me in return,—lay in their own stock of wood, flour, butter, oil, wine, etc., all which they would procure directly from the producers. Thus, they would pay three or four sous for a bottle of pure, wholesome wine, instead of paying twelve or fifteen sous for poison. Every week the association would buy a whole ox and some sheep, and the women would make bread, as in the country. Finally, with these resources and order and economy, my workmen may have wholesome, agreeable, and sufficient food for from twenty to twenty-five sous a day.”

“Ah! this explains it, M. Agricola.”

“It is not all, mademoiselle. Our cool-headed speculator would continue: ‘Here are my workmen well lodged, well warmed, well fed, with a saving of at least half; why should they not also be warmly clad? Their health will then have every chance of being good, and health is labor. The association will buy wholesale and at the manufacturing price (still upon my security, secured to me by their wages) warm, good, strong materials, which a portion of the workmen’s wives will be able to make into clothes as well as any tailor. Finally, the consumption of caps and shoes being considerable, the association will obtain them at a great reduction in price.’ Well, Mademoiselle Angela! what do you say to our speculator?”

“I say, M. Agricola,” answered the young girl, with ingenuous admiration, “that it is almost incredible, and yet so simple.”

“No doubt nothing is more simple than the good and beautiful, and yet we think of it so seldom. Observe, that our man has only been speaking with a view to his own interest—only considering the material side of the question—reckoning for nothing the habit of fraternity and mutual aid, which inevitably springs from living together in common, not reflecting that a better mode of life improves and softens the character of man, not thinking of the support and instruction which the strong owe to the weak; not acknowledging, in fine, that the honest, active, and industrious man has a positive right to demand employment from society, and wages proportionate to the wants of his condition. No, our speculator only thinks of the gross profits; and yet, you

see, he invests his money in buildings at five per cent., and finds the greatest advantages in the material comfort of his workmen."

"It is true, M. Agricola."

"And what will you say, mademoiselle, when I prove to you that our speculator finds also a great advantage in giving to his workmen, in addition to their regular wages, a proportionate share of his profits?"

"That appears to be more difficult to prove, M. Agricola."

"Yet I will convince you of it in a few minutes."

Thus conversing, Angela and Agricola had reached the garden-gate of the common dwelling-house. An elderly woman, dressed plainly, but with care and neatness, approached Agricola and asked him:

"Has M. Hardy returned to the factory, sir?"

"No, madame; but we expect him hourly."

"To-day, perhaps?"

"To-day or to-morrow, madame."

"You cannot tell me at what hour he will be here?"

"I do not think it is known, madame, but the porter of the factory, who also belongs to M. Hardy's private house, may, perhaps, be able to inform you."

"I thank you, sir"

"Quite welcome, madame."

"M. Agricola," said Angela, when the woman who had just questioned him was gone, "did you remark that this lady was very pale and agitated?"

"I noticed it as you did, mademoiselle; I thought I saw tears standing in her eyes."

"Yes, she seemed to have been crying. Poor woman! perhaps she came to ask assistance of M. Hardy. But what ails you, M. Agricola? You appear quite pensive."

Agricola had a vague presentiment that the visit of this elderly woman with so sad a countenance had some connection with the adventure of the young and pretty lady who, three days before, had come all agitated and in tears to inquire after M. Hardy, and who had learned, perhaps too late, that she was watched and followed.

"Forgive me, mademoiselle," said Agricola to Angela; "but the presence of this old lady reminded me of a circumstance, which, unfortunately, I cannot tell you, for it is a secret that does not belong to me alone."

"Oh! do not trouble yourself, M. Agricola," answered the young girl, with a smile; "I am not inquisitive, and what we were talking of before interests me so much, that I do not wish to hear you speak of anything else."

"Well, then, mademoiselle, I will say a few words more, and you will be as well informed as I am of the secrets of our association."

"I am listening, M. Agricola."

"Let us still keep in view the speculator, from mere interest. 'Here are my workmen,' says he, 'in the best possible condition to do a great deal of work. Now, what is to be done to obtain large profits?—produce cheaply and sell dear. But there will be no cheapness without economy in the use of the raw material, perfection of the manufacturing process, and celerity of labor. Now, in spite of all my vigilance, how am I to prevent my workmen from wasting the materials? How am I to induce them, each in his own province, to seek for the most simple and least irksome processes?'"

"True, M. Agricola; how is that to be done?"

"'And that is not all,' says our man; 'to sell my produce at high prices, it should be irreproachable, excellent. My workmen do pretty well, but that is not enough. I want them to produce master-pieces.'"

"But, M. Agricola, when they have once performed the task set them, what interest have workmen to give themselves a great deal of trouble to produce master-pieces?"

"There it is, Mademoiselle Angela; WHAT INTEREST have they? Therefore, our speculator soon says to himself: 'That my workmen may have an *interest* to be economical in the use of the materials, an interest to employ their time well, an interest to invent new and better manufacturing processes, an interest to send out of their hands nothing but master-pieces, I must give them an interest in the profits earned by their economy, activity, zeal, and skill. The better they manufacture the better I shall sell, and the larger will be their gain, and mine also.'"

"Oh! now I understand, M. Agricola."

"And our speculator would make a good speculation. Before he was interested, the workman said: 'What does it matter to me that I do more or better in the course of the day? What shall I gain by it? Nothing. Well, then, little work for little wages. But now, on the contrary, he says: I have an interest in displaying zeal and economy. All is changed. I redouble my activity and try to excel the others. If a comrade is lazy, and likely to do harm to the factory, I have the right to say to him: "Mate, we all suffer more or less from your laziness, and from the injury you are doing the common weal."'"

"And then, M. Agricola, with what ardor, courage, and hope you must set to work!"

"That is what our speculator counts on; and he may say to himself, further: 'Treasures of experience and practical wisdom are often buried

in workshops for want of good-will, opportunity, or encouragement. Excellent workmen, instead of making all the improvements in their power, follow with indifference the old jog-trot. What a pity! for an intelligent man, occupied all his life with some special employment, must discover, in the long run, a thousand ways of doing his work better and quicker. I will form, therefore, a sort of consulting committee; I will summon to it my foreman and my most skilled workmen. Our interest is now the same. Light will necessarily spring from this center of practical intelligence.' Now, the speculator is not deceived in this; and soon struck with the incredible resources, the thousand new, ingenious, perfect inventions suddenly revealed by his workmen,—'Why,' he exclaims, 'if you knew this, did you not tell it before? What for the last ten years has cost me a hundred francs to make would have cost me only fifty, without reckoning an enormous saving of time.' 'Sir,' answers the workman, who is not more stupid than others, 'what interest had I that you should effect a saving of fifty per cent.? None. But now it is different. You give me, besides my wages, a share in your profits; you raise me in my own esteem, by consulting my experience and knowledge. Instead of treating me as an inferior being, you enter into communion with me. It is my interest, it is my duty, to tell you all I know, and to try to acquire more.' And thus it is, Mademoiselle Angela, that the speculator can organize his establishment so as to shame his oppositionists and provoke their envy. Now if, instead of a cold-hearted calculator, we take a man who unites with the knowledge of these facts the tender and generous sympathies of an evangelical heart and the elevation of a superior mind, he will extend his ardent solicitude, not only to the material comfort, but to the moral emancipation of his workmen. Seeking everywhere every possible means to develop their intelligence, to improve their hearts, and strong in the authority acquired by his beneficence, feeling that he on whom depends the happiness or the misery of three hundred human creatures has also the care of souls, he will be the guide of those whom he no longer calls his workmen, but his brothers, in a straightforward and noble path, and will try to create in them the taste for knowledge and art which will render them happy and proud of a condition of life that is often accepted by others with tears and curses of despair. Well, Mademoiselle Angela, such a man is—but, see! he could not arrive amongst us except in the middle of a blessing. There he is—there is M. Hardy!"

"Oh, M. Agricola!" said Angela, deeply moved, and drying her tears; "we should receive him with our hands clasped in gratitude."

"Look if that mild and noble countenance is not the image of his admirable soul!"

A carriage with post-horses, in which was M. Hardy, with M. de Blessac, the unworthy friend who was betraying him in so infamous a manner, entered at this moment the court-yard of the factory.

A little while after a humble hackney-coach was seen advancing also toward the factory, from the direction of Paris. In this coach was Rodin.

CHAPTER IV

REVELATIONS

DURING the visit of Angela and Agricola to the common dwelling-house, the band of *Wolves*, joined upon the road by many of the haunters of taverns, continued to march toward the factory, which the hackney-coach that brought Rodin from Paris was also fast approaching.

M. Hardy, on getting out of the carriage with his friend M. de Bles-sac, had entered the parlor of the house that he occupied next the factory.

M. Hardy was of middle size, with an elegant and slight figure, which announced a nature essentially nervous and impressionable. His forehead was broad and open, his complexion pale, his eyes black, full at once of mildness and penetration, his countenance honest, intelligent, and attractive.

One word will paint the character of M. Hardy. His mother had called him her Sensitive Plant. His was indeed one of those fine and exquisitely delicate organizations which are trusting, loving, noble, generous, but so susceptible that the least touch makes them shrink into themselves. If we join to this excessive sensibility a passionate love for art, a first-rate intellect, tastes essentially refined, and then think of the thousand deceptions and numberless infamies of which M. Hardy must have been the victim in his career as a manufacturer, we shall wonder how this heart, so delicate and tender, had not been broken a thousand times in its incessant struggle with merciless self-interest. M. Hardy had indeed suffered much. Forced to follow the career of productive industry, to honor the engagements of his father, a model of uprightness and probity, who had yet left his affairs somewhat embarrassed, in consequence of the events of 1815, he had succeeded, by perseverance and capacity, in attaining one of the most honorable positions in the commercial world. But, to arrive at this point, what



ignoble annoyances had he to bear with, what perfidious opposition to combat, what hateful rivalries to tire out !

Sensitive as he was, M. Hardy would a thousand times have fallen a victim to his emotions of painful indignation against baseness, of bitter disgust at dishonesty, but for the wise and firm support of his mother. When he returned to her, after a day of painful struggles with odious deceptions, he found himself suddenly transported into an atmosphere of such beneficent purity, of such radiant serenity, that he lost almost on the instant the remembrance of the base things by which he had been so cruelly tortured during the day ; the pangs of his heart were appeased at the mere contact of her great and lofty soul ; and, therefore, his love for her resembled idolatry. When he lost her he experienced one of those calm, deep sorrows which have no end — which become, as it were, part of life, and have even sometimes their days of melancholy sweetness. A little while after this great misfortune M. Hardy became more closely connected with his workmen. He had always been a just and good master ; but, although the place that his mother left in his heart would ever remain void, he felt, as it were, a redoubled overflowing of the affections, and the more he suffered the more he craved to see happy faces around him. The wonderful ameliorations which he now produced in the physical and moral condition of all about him served, not to divert, but to occupy his grief. Little by little, he withdrew from the world, and concentrated his life in three affections : a tender and devoted friendship, which seemed to include all past friendships ; a love ardent and sincere, like a last passion ; and a paternal attachment to his workmen. His days therefore passed in the heart of that little world, so full of respect and gratitude toward him — a world which he had, as it were, created after the image of his mind, that he might find there a refuge from the painful realities he dreaded, surrounded with good, intelligent, happy beings, capable of responding to the noble thoughts which had become more and more necessary to his existence. Thus, after many sorrows, M. Hardy arrived at the maturity of age, possessing a sincere friend, a mistress worthy of his love, and, knowing himself certain of the passionate devotion of his workmen, had attained, at the period of this history, all the happiness he could hope for since his mother's death.

M. de Blessac, his bosom friend, had long been worthy of his touching and fraternal affection ; but we have seen by what diabolical means Father d'Aigrigny and Rodin had succeeded in making M. de Blessac, until then upright and sincere, the instrument of their machinations.

The two friends, who had felt on their journey a little of the sharp influence of the north wind, were warming themselves at a good fire lighted in M. Hardy's parlor.

"Oh! my dear Marcel, I begin really to get old," said M. Hardy, with a smile, addressing M. de Blessac; "I feel more and more the want of being at home. To depart from my usual habits has become painful to me, and I execrate whatever obliges me to leave this happy little spot of ground."

"And when I think," answered M. de Blessac, unable to forbear blushing, "when I think, my friend, that you undertook this long journey only for my sake! ——"

"Well, my dear Marcel! have you not just accompanied me in your turn in an excursion which, without you, would have been as tiresome as it has been charming?"

"What a difference, my friend! I have contracted toward you a debt that I can never repay."

"Nonsense, my dear Marcel! Between us there are no distinctions of *meum* and *tuum*. Besides, in matters of friendship it is as sweet to give as to receive."

"Noble heart! noble heart!"

"Say, happy heart! most happy in the last affections for which it beats."

"And who, gracious Heaven! could deserve happiness on earth, if it be not you, my friend?"

"And to what do I owe that happiness? To the affections which I found here ready to sustain me when, deprived of the support of my mother, who was all my strength, I felt myself—I confess my weakness—almost incapable of standing up against adversity."

"You, my friend, with so firm and resolute a character in doing good, you, that I have seen struggle with so much energy and courage to secure the triumph of some great and noble idea?"

"Yes; but the farther I advance in my career the more I am disgusted with all base and shameful actions, and the less strength I feel to encounter them."

"Were it necessary, you would have the courage, my friend."

"My dear Marcel," replied M. Hardy, with mild and restrained emotion, "I have often said to you: My courage was my mother. You see, my friend, when I went to her, with my heart torn by some horrible ingratitude or disgusted by some base deceit, she, taking my hands between her own venerable palms, would say to me in her grave and tender voice: 'My dear child, it is for the ungrateful and dishonest to suffer; let us pity the wicked, let us forget evil, and only think of good.' Then, my friend, this heart, painfully contracted, expanded beneath the sacred influence of the maternal words, and every day I gathered strength from her to recommence on the morrow a cruel struggle with

the sad necessities of my condition. Happily, it has pleased God that, after losing that beloved mother, I have been able to bind up my life with affections, deprived of which, I confess, I should find myself feeble and disarmed; for you cannot tell, Marcel, the support, the strength that I have found in your friendship."

"Do not speak of me, my dear friend," replied M. de Blessac, dissembling his embarrassment. "Let us talk of another affection, almost as sweet and tender as that of a mother."

"I understand you, my good Marcel," replied M. Hardy; "I have concealed nothing from you, since, under such serious circumstances, I had recourse to the counsels of your friendship. Well! yes; I think that every day I live augments my adoration for this woman, the only one that I have ever passionately loved, the only one that I shall now ever love. And then I must tell you that my mother, not knowing what Margaret was to me, was often loud in her praise, and that circumstance renders this love almost sacred in my eyes."

"And then there are such strange resemblances between Madame de Noisy's character and yours, my friend; above all, in her worship of her mother."

"It is true, Marcel; that affection has often caused me both admiration and torment. How often she has said to me, with her habitual frankness: 'I have sacrificed all for you, but I would sacrifice you for my mother.'"

"Thank Heaven, my friend, you will never see Madame de Noisy exposed to that cruel choice. Her mother, you say, has long renounced her intention of returning to America, where M. de Noisy, perfectly careless of his wife, appears to have settled himself permanently. Thanks to the discreet devotion of the excellent woman by whom Margaret was brought up, your love is concealed in the deepest mystery. What could disturb it now?"

"Nothing — oh! nothing," cried M. Hardy. "I have almost security for its duration."

"What do you mean, my friend?"

"I do not know if I ought to tell you."

"Have you ever found me indiscreet, my friend?"

"You, good Marcel! how can you suppose such a thing?" said M. Hardy, in a tone of friendly reproach; "no! but I do not like to tell you of my happiness till it is complete; and I am not yet quite certain —"

A servant entered this moment and said to M. Hardy:

"Sir, there is an old gentleman who wishes to speak to you on very pressing business."

"So soon!" said M. Hardy, with a slight movement of impatience. "With your permission, my friend."

Then, as M. de Blessac seemed about to withdraw into the next room, M. Hardy added, with a smile:

"No, no; do not stir. Your presence will shorten the interview."

"But if it be a matter of business, my friend?"

"I do everything openly, as you know." Then, addressing the servant, M. Hardy bade him:

"Ask the gentleman to walk in."

"The postilion wishes to know if he is to wait?"

"Certainly; he will take M. de Blessac back to Paris."

The servant withdrew, and presently returned, introducing Rodin, with whom M. de Blessac was not acquainted, his treacherous bargain having been negotiated through another agent.

"M. Hardy?" said Rodin, bowing respectfully to the two friends, and looking from one to the other with an air of inquiry.

"That is my name, sir; what can I do to serve you?" answered the manufacturer kindly; for, at first sight of the humble and ill-dressed old man, he expected an application for assistance.

"M. François Hardy," repeated Rodin, as if he wished to make sure of the identity of the person.

"I have had the honor to tell you that I am he."

"I have a private communication to make to you, sir," said Rodin.

"You may speak, sir. This gentleman is my friend," said M. Hardy, pointing to M. de Blessac.

"But I wish to speak to you alone, sir," resumed Rodin.

M. de Blessac was again about to withdraw, when M. Hardy retained him with a glance, and said to Rodin kindly, for he thought his feelings might be hurt by asking a favor in presence of a third party.

"Permit me to inquire if it is on your account or on mine that you wish this interview to be secret?"

"On your account entirely, sir," answered Rodin.

"Then, sir," said M. Hardy, with some surprise, "you may speak out. I have no secrets from this gentleman."

After a moment's silence, Rodin resumed, addressing himself to M. Hardy:

"Sir, you deserve, I know, all the good that is said of you; and you therefore command the sympathy of every honest man."

"I hope so, sir."

"Now, as an honest man, I come to render you a service."

"And this service, sir ——"

"To reveal to you an infamous piece of treachery, of which you have been the victim."

"I think, sir, you must be deceived."

"I have the proofs of what I assert."

"Proofs?"

"The written proofs of the treachery that I come to reveal; I have them here," answered Rodin. "In a word, a man whom you believed your friend has shamefully deceived you, sir."

"And the name of this man?"

"M. Marcel de Blessac," replied Rodin.

On these words, M. de Blessac started and became pale as death.

He could hardly murmur:

"Sir ——"

But, without looking at his friend or perceiving his agitation, M. Hardy seized his hand and exclaimed hastily:

"Silence, my friend!" Then, while his eye flashed with indignation, he turned toward Rodin, who had not ceased to look him full in the face, and said to him, with an air of lofty disdain:

"What! do you accuse M. de Blessac?"

"Yes, I accuse him," replied Rodin briefly.

"Do you know him?"

"I have never seen him."

"Of what do you accuse him? And how dare you say that he has betrayed me?"

"Two words, if you please," said Rodin, with an emotion which he appeared hardly able to restrain. "If one man of honor sees another about to be slain by an assassin, ought he not give the alarm of murder?"

"Yes, sir; but what has that to do ——"

"In my eyes, sir, certain treasons are as criminal as murders; I have come to place myself between the assassin and his victim."

"The assassin? The victim?" said M. Hardy, more and more astonished.

"You doubtless know M. de Blessac's writing?" said Rodin.

"Yes, sir."

"Then read this," said Rodin, drawing from his pocket a letter which he handed to M. Hardy.

Casting now for the first time a glance at M. de Blessac, the manufacturer drew back a step, terrified at the deathlike paleness of this man who, struck dumb with shame, could not find a word to justify himself; for he was far from possessing the audacious effrontery necessary to carry him through his treachery.

"Marcel!" cried M. Hardy in alarm, and deeply agitated by this unexpected blow. "Marcel! how pale you are! you do not answer!"

"Marcel! This, then, is M. de Blessac?" cried Rodin, feigning the most painful surprise. "Oh, sir, if I had known ——"

"But don't you hear this man, Marcel?" cried M. Hardy. "He says that you have betrayed me infamously."

He seized the hand of M. de Blessac. That hand was cold as ice.

"Oh, God! Oh, God!" said M. Hardy, drawing back in horror; "he makes no answer!"

"Since I am in presence of M. de Blessac," resumed Rodin, "I am forced to ask him if he can deny having addressed many letters to the Rue du Milieu des Ursins, at Paris, under cover of M. Rodin."

M. de Blessac remained dumb.

M. Hardy, still unwilling to believe what he saw and heard, convulsively tore open the letter, which Rodin had just delivered to him, and read the first few lines, interrupting the perusal with exclamations of grief and amazement. He did not require to finish the letter, to convince himself of the black treachery of M. de Blessac. He staggered; for a moment his senses seemed to abandon him. The horrible discovery made him giddy, and his head swam on his first look down into that abyss of infamy. The loathsome letter dropped from his trembling hands. But soon indignation, rage, and scorn succeeded this moment of despair, and rushing, pale and terrible, upon M. de Blessac:

"Wretch!" he exclaimed, with a threatening gesture. But, pausing as in the act to strike: "No!" he added, with fearful calmness. "It would be to soil my hand."

He turned toward Rodin, who had approached hastily, as if to interpose.

"It is not worth while chastising a wretch," said M. Hardy; "but I will press your honest hand, sir,—for you have had the courage to unmask a traitor and a coward."

"Sir!" cried M. de Blessac, overcome with shame; "I am at your orders—and ——"

He could not finish. The sound of voices was heard behind the door, which opened violently, and an aged woman entered, in spite of the efforts of the servant, exclaiming in an agitated voice:

"I tell you, I must speak instantly to your master."

On hearing this voice, and at sight of the pale, weeping woman, M. Hardy, forgetting M. de Blessac, Rodin, the infamous treachery, and all, fell back a step and exclaimed:

"Madame Duparc! you here! What is the matter?"

"Oh, sir! a great misfortune ——"

"Margaret!" cried M. Hardy, in a tone of despair

"She is gone, sir!"

"Gone!" repeated M. Hardy, as horrorstruck as if a thunderbolt had fallen at his feet. "Margaret gone!"



"All is discovered. Her mother took her away — three days ago!" said the unhappy woman, in a failing voice.

"Gone! Margaret! It is not true. You deceive me," cried M. Hardy.

Refusing to hear more, wild, despairing, he rushed out of the house, threw himself into his carriage, to which the post-horses were still harnessed, waiting for M. de Blessac, and said to the postilion:

“To Paris! as fast as you can go!”

As the carriage, rapid as lightning, started upon the road to Paris, the wind brought nearer the distant sound of the war-song of the *Wolves*, who were rushing toward the factory.

CHAPTER V

THE ATTACK

WHEN M. Hardy had quitted the factory, Rodin, who was not prepared for this sudden departure, returned slowly to his hackney-coach; but he stopped suddenly, and started with pleasure and surprise when he saw, at some distance, Marshal Simon and his father advancing toward one of the wings of the common dwelling-house; for an accidental circumstance had so far delayed the interview of the father and son.

"Very well!" said Rodin. "Better and better! Now, only let my man have found out and persuaded little Rose-Pompon!"

And Rodin hastened toward his hackney-coach.

At this moment the wind, which continued to rise, brought to the ear of the Jesuit the war-song of the approaching *Wolves*.

After having listened attentively for a moment to this distant noise, with his foot on the step, Rodin, as he took his seat, said:

"At present the worthy M. Van Dael of Java will be sure that his drafts on the Baron Tripeaud are good."

The coach took the road toward the barrier.

Several workmen about to return to Paris with the answer of their comrades to other propositions relative to the secret societies, had need of conferring apart with the father of Marshal Simon. Hence the delay in his interview with his son.

The old man, foreman of the factory, occupied two rooms on the ground-floor at the end of one of the wings of the common dwelling; a little garden, where he amused himself, lay below his windows; the glass door which led to it was always open, and allowed the already warm sun of March to penetrate to the modest room, into which there had just entered a workman in a blouse and a marshal of France in full uniform.

The marshal, clasping his father's hands between his, said, in a voice of such deep emotion that the old man started :

"Father, I am very unhappy."

A painful expression, until then concealed, suddenly darkened the countenance of the marshal.

"You unhappy?" cried Father Simon anxiously, as he pressed nearer to the marshal.

"I will tell you all, father," replied the marshal in a changed voice, "for I have need of your advice."

"As regards honor or loyalty, you have no need of any one's advice."

"You alone, father, can relieve me from a state of uncertainty which torments me."

"Explain yourself, I beg."

"For some days my daughters have appeared constrained in manner and lost in thought. During the first moments of our reunion they were mad with joy and happiness. Suddenly all has changed; they are becoming more and more sad. Yesterday I detected tears in their eyes; then, deeply moved, I clasped them in my arms and implored them to tell me the cause of their sorrow. Without answering, they threw themselves on my neck and covered my face with their tears."

"It is strange. To what do you attribute this alteration?"

"Sometimes I think I have not sufficiently concealed from them the grief occasioned me by the loss of their mother, and they are, perhaps, miserable that they do not suffice for my happiness. And yet—inexplicable as it is—they seem not only to understand but to share my sorrow. Yesterday Blanche said to me: 'How much happier still should we be if our mother were with us! —'"

"Sharing your sorrow, they cannot reproach you with it. There must be some other cause for their grief."

"So I have said to myself. But what is the cause? I try in vain to discover it. Sometimes I even imagine an evil demon has come between my children and me. An absurd, foolish idea, I know; but when sound reasons fail, the most senseless suppositions are embraced."

"Who could come between you and your children?"

"No one I know"

"Come, come," said the old man paternally, "wait, have patience, watch, examine these poor young hearts with the care I know you possess, and you will discover, I am sure, some very innocent secret."

"Yes," said the marshal, looking fixedly at his father; "yes; but to penetrate this secret it would be necessary not to leave them."

"What do you mean?"

"First learn, father, what are the duties which would keep me here;

then you shall know those which may take me away from you, from my daughters, and from my other child."

"What other child?"

"The son of my old friend; the Indian prince."

"Djalma? Is there anything the matter with him?"

"Father, he frightens me. I told you, father, of his mad and unhappy passion for Mademoiselle de Cardoville."

"Does that frighten you, my son?" said the old man, looking at the marshal with surprise. "Djalma is only eighteen, and, at that age, one love drives away another."

All at once an alarming sound was borne by a gust of wind, and the marshal paused.

"What is that?"

After listening to the confused noises coming and going with the blast, the old man said:

"Some drunkards singing."

"It sounds like the cries of a crowd," replied the marshal, and then, when the sound ceased, continued:

"You have no idea of the ravages which the passion has already made in the ardent, indomitable boy; sometimes fits of savage ferocity follow the most painful dejection. Yesterday I came suddenly upon him; his eyes were bloodshot, his features contracted with rage; yielding to an impulse of mad fury, he was piercing with his poniard a cushion of red cloth, while he exclaimed, panting for breath: '*Ha! blood! I will have blood!*' 'Unhappy boy!' I said to him, 'what means this insane passion?' '*I'm killing the man!*' replied he, in a hollow and savage voice; it is thus he designates his supposed rival."

"There is indeed something terrible," said the old man, "in such a passion, in such a heart."

"At other times," resumed the marshal, "it is against Mademoiselle de Cardoville that his rage bursts forth; and at others against himself. I have been obliged to remove his weapons, for a man who came with him from Java, and who appears much attached to him, has informed me that he suspected him of entertaining some thoughts of suicide."

"Unfortunate boy!"

"Well, father," said Marshal Simon, with profound bitterness; "it is at the moment when my daughters and my adopted son require all my solicitude that I am perhaps on the eve of quitting them."

"Of quitting them?"

"Yes, to fulfill a still more sacred duty than that imposed by friendship or family," said the marshal, in so grave and solemn a tone that his father exclaimed, with deep emotion:

"What can this duty be?"

"Father," said the marshal, after remaining a moment in thoughtful silence, "who made me what I am? Who gave me the ducal title and the marshal's baton?"

"Napoleon."

"For you, the stern republican, I know that he lost all his value when, from the first citizen of a republic, he became an emperor."

"I cursed his weakness," said Father Simon sadly; "the demi-god sank into a man."

"But for me, father—for me, the soldier, who have always fought beside him, or under his eye; for me, whom he raised from the lowest rank in the army to the highest; for me, whom he loaded with benefits and marks of affection; for me, he was more than a hero, he was a friend—and there was as much gratitude as admiration in my idolatry for him. When he was exiled, I would fain have shared his exile; they refused me that favor; then I conspired, then I drew my sword against those who had robbed his son of the crown which France had given him."

"And, in your position, you did well, Pierre; without sharing your admiration, I understood your gratitude. The projects of exile, the conspiracies—I approved them all; you know it."

"Well, then, that disinherited child, in whose name I conspired seventeen years ago, is now of an age to wield his father's sword."

"Napoleon II.!" exclaimed the old man, looking at his son in surprise and extreme anxiety; "the King of Rome!"

"King? no; he is no longer king. Napoleon? no; he is no longer Napoleon. They have given him some Austrian name, because the other frightened them. Everything frightens them. Do you know what they are doing with the son of the emperor?" resumed the marshal, with painful excitement. "They are torturing him—killing him by inches!"

"Who told you this?"

"Somebody who knows, whose words are but too true. Yes; the son of the emperor struggles with all his strength against a premature death. With his eyes turned toward France, he waits—he waits—and no one comes—no one; out of all the men that his father made as great as they once were little, not one thinks of that crowned child, whom they are stifling till he dies."

"But you think of him?"

"Yes; but I had first to learn—oh! there is no doubt of it, for I have not derived all my information from the same source—I had first to learn the cruel fate of this youth, to whom I also swore allegiance; for one day, as I have told you, the emperor, proud and loving father as he was, showed him to me in his cradle, and said: 'My old friend, you will be

to the son what you have been to the father: who loves us, loves our France.'"

"Yes, I know it. Many times you have repeated those words to me, and, like yourself, I have been moved by them."

"Well, father! suppose, informed of the sufferings of the son of the emperor, I had seen—with the positive certainty that I was not deceived—a letter from a person of high rank in the court of Vienna, offering to a man that was still faithful to the emperor's memory the means of communicating with the King of Rome, and perhaps of saving him from his tormentors ——"

"What next?" said the workman, looking fixedly at his son. "Suppose Napoleon II. once at liberty ——"

"What next?" exclaimed the marshal. Then he added, in a suppressed voice: "Do you think, father, that France is insensible to the humiliations she endures? Do you think that the memory of the emperor is extinct? No, no; it is, above all, in the days of our country's degradation that she whispers that sacred name. How would it be, then, were that name to rise glorious on the frontier, reviving in his son? Do you not think that the heart of all France would beat for him?"

"This implies a conspiracy against the present government, with Napoleon II. for a watchword," said the workman. "This is very serious."

"I told you, father, that I was very unhappy; judge if it be not so," cried the marshal. "Not only I ask myself if I ought to abandon my children and you, to run the risk of so daring an enterprise, but I ask myself if I am not bound to the present government, which, in acknowledging my rank and title, if it bestowed no favor, at least did me an act of justice. How shall I decide?—abandon all that I love, or remain insensible to the tortures of the son of the emperor—of that emperor to whom I owe everything, to whom I have sworn fidelity, both to himself and child? Shall I lose this only opportunity, perhaps, of saving him, or shall I conspire in his favor? Tell me if I exaggerate what I owe to the memory of the emperor? Decide for me, father! During a whole sleepless night I strove to discover, in the midst of this chaos, the line prescribed by honor; but I only wandered from indecision to indecision. You alone, father—you alone, I repeat, can direct me."

After remaining for some moments in deep thought the old man was about to answer, when some person, running across the little garden, opened the door hastily and entered the room in which were the marshal and his father. It was Olivier, the young workman, who had

been able to effect his escape from the village in which the *Wolves* had assembled.

"M. Simon! M. Simon!" cried he, pale and panting for breath. "They are here—close at hand. They have come to attack the factory"

"Who?" cried the old man, rising hastily.

"The *Wolves*, quarrymen and stonecutters, joined on the road by a crowd of people from the neighborhood, and vagabonds from town. Do you not hear them? They are shouting, 'Death to the *Devourers*!'"

The clamor was indeed approaching, and grew more and more distinct.

"It is the same noise that I heard just now," said the marshal, rising in his turn.

"There are more than two hundred of them, M. Simon," said Olivier; "they are armed with clubs and stones, and unfortunately the greater part of our workmen are in Paris. We are not above forty here in all; the women and children are already flying to their chambers, screaming for terror. Do you not hear them?"

The ceiling shook beneath the tread of many hasty feet.

"Will this attack be a serious one?" said the marshal to his father, who appeared more and more dejected.

"Very serious," said the old man; "there is nothing more fierce than these combats between different unions; and everything has been done lately to excite the people of the neighborhood against the factory"

"If you are so inferior in number," said the marshal, "you must begin by barricading all the doors, and then ——"

He was unable to conclude. A burst of ferocious cries shook the windows of the room, and seemed so near and loud that the marshal, his father, and the young workman rushed out into the little garden, which was bounded on one side by a wall that separated it from the fields.

Suddenly, while the shouts redoubled in violence, a shower of large stones, intended to break the windows of the house, smashed some of the panes on the first story, struck against the wall, and fell into the garden all around the marshal and his father.

By a fatal chance one of these large stones struck the old man on the head. He staggered, bent forward, and fell bleeding into the arms of Marshal Simon, just as arose from without, with increased fury, the savage cries of, "Death to the *Devourers*!"

CHAPTER VI

THE "WOLVES" AND THE "DEVOURERS"



It was a frightful thing to view the approach of the lawless crowd, whose first act of hostility had been so fatal to Marshal Simon's father.

One wing of the common dwelling-house, which joined the garden-wall on that side, was next to the fields. It was there that the *Wolves* began their attack. The precipitation of their march, the halt they had made at two public-houses on the road, their ardent impatience for the approaching struggle, had inflamed these men to a high pitch of savage excitement. Having discharged their first shower of stones, most of the assailants stooped down to look for more ammunition. Some of them, to do so with greater ease, held their bludgeons between their teeth; others had placed them against the wall; here and there groups had formed tumultuously round the principal leaders of the band; the most neatly dressed of these men wore frocks, with caps, while others were almost in rags, for, as we have already said, many of the hangers-on at the barriers, and people without any profession, had joined the troop of the *Wolves*, whether welcome or not. Some hideous women, with tattered garments, who always seem to follow in the track of such people, accompanied them on this occasion, and, by their cries and fury, inflamed still more the general excitement. One of them, tall, robust, with purple complexion, bloodshot eyes, and toothless jaws, had a handkerchief over her head, from beneath which escaped her yellow, frowsy hair. Over her ragged gown she wore an old plaid shawl, crossed over her bosom, and tied behind her back. This hag seemed possessed with a demon. She had tucked up her half-torn sleeves; in one hand she brandished a stick, in the other she grasped a huge stone; her companions called her *Ciboule* (scullion).

This horrible hag exclaimed, in a hoarse voice:

"I'll bite the women of the factory; I'll make them bleed."

The ferocious words were received with applause by her companions, and with savage cries of "Ciboule forever!" which excited her to frenzy.

Amongst the other leaders was a small, dry, pale man, with the face of a ferret, and a black beard all round the chin; he wore a scarlet Greek cap, and beneath his long blouse, perfectly new, appeared a pair of neat cloth trousers, strapped over thin boots. This man was evidently of a different condition of life from that of the other persons in the troop; it was he in particular who ascribed the most irritating and insulting language to the workmen of the factory, with regard to the inhabitants of the neighborhood. He howled a great deal, but he carried neither stick nor stone. A full-faced, fresh-colored man, with a formidable bass voice like a chorister's, asked him: "Will you not have a shot at those impious dogs, who might bring down the cholera on the country, as the curate told us?"

"I will have a better shot than you," said the little man, with a singular, sinister smile.

"And with what, I'd like to see?"

"Probably, with this," said the little man, stooping to pick up a large stone; but, as he bent, a well-filled though light bag, which he appeared to carry under his blouse, fell to the ground.

"Look, you are losing both bag and baggage," said the other; "it does not seem very heavy"

"They are samples of wool," answered the man with the ferret's face, as he hastily picked up the bag and replaced it under his blouse; then he added: "Attention! the big quarryman is going to speak."

And, in fact, he who exercised the most complete ascendancy over this irritated crowd was the terrible quarryman. His gigantic form towered so much above the multitude, that his great head, bound in its ragged handkerchief, and his herculean shoulders, covered with a fallow goat-skin, were always visible above the level of that dark and swarming crowd, only relieved here and there by a few women's caps, like so many white points.

Seeing to what a degree of exasperation the minds of the crowd had reached, the small number of honest but misguided workmen, who had allowed themselves to be drawn into this dangerous enterprise under the pretext of a quarrel between rival unions, now fearing for the consequences of the struggle, tried, but too late, to abandon the main body. Pressed close, and, as it were, girt in with the more hostile groups, dreading to pass for cowards, or to expose themselves to the bad treatment of the majority, they were forced to wait for a more favorable moment to effect their escape.

To the savage cheers, which had accompanied the first discharge of

stones, succeeded a deep silence commanded by the stentorian voice of the quarryman.

"The *Wolres* have howled," he exclaimed; "let us wait and see how the *Devourers* will answer, and when they will begin the fight."



"We must draw them out of their factory, and fight them on neutral ground," said the little man with the ferret's face, who appeared to be the thieves' advocate; "otherwise there would be trespass."

"What do we care about trespass!" cried the horrible hag, Ciboule; "in or out, I will tear the chits of the factory"

"Yes, yes," cried other hideous creatures, as ragged as Ciboule herself; "we must not leave all to the men."

"We must have our fun too!"

"The women of the factory say that all the women of the neighborhood are drunken drabs," cried the little man with the ferret's face.

"Good! we'll pay them for it."

"The women shall have their share."

"That's our business."

"They like to sing in their common house," cried Ciboule; "we will make them sing the wrong side of their mouths, in the key of 'Oh, dear me!'"

This pleasantry was received with shouts, hootings, and furious stamping of feet, to which the stentorian voice of the quarryman put a term by roaring:

"Silence!"

"Silence! silence!" repeated the crowd. "Hear the quarryman!"

"If the *Devourers* are cowards enough not to dare to show themselves, after a second volley of stones, there is a door down there which we can break open, and we will soon hunt them from their holes."

"It would be better to draw them out, so that none might remain in the factory," said the little old man with the ferret's face, who appeared to have some secret motive.

"A man fights where he can," cried the quarryman, in a voice of thunder; "all right, if we can but once catch hold. We could fight on a sloping roof or on the top of a wall — couldn't we, my *Wolves*?"

"Yes, yes!" cried the crowd, still more excited by those savage words; "if they don't come out, we will break in."

"We will see their fine palace!"

"The pagans haven't even a chapel," said the bass voice. "The curate has damned them all!"

"Why should they have a palace, and we nothing but dog-kennels?"

"Hardy's workmen say that kennels are good enough for such as you," said the little man with the ferret's face.

"Yes, yes! they said so."

"We'll break all their traps."

"We'll pull down their bazar."

"We'll throw the house out of the windows."

"When we have made the mealy-mouthed chits sing," cried Ciboule, "we will make them dance to the clatter of stones on their heads."

"Come, my *Wolves*! attention!" cried the quarryman, still in the

same stentorian voice; "one more volley, and if the *Devourers* do not come out, down with the door!"

This proposition was received with cheers of savage ardor, and the quarryman, whose voice rose above the tumult, cried with all the strength of his herculean lungs:

"Attention, *Wolves*! Make ready! all together. Now, are you ready?"

"Yes, yes—all ready!"

"Then, present!—fire!" And, for a second time, a shower of enormous stones poured upon that side of the common dwelling-house which was turned toward the fields. A part of these projectiles broke such of the windows as had been spared by the first volley. To the sharp smashing and cracking of glass were joined the ferocious cries uttered in chorus by this formidable mob, drunk with its own excesses:

"Death to the *Devourers*!"

Soon these outcries became perfectly frantic, when, through the broken windows, the assailants perceived women running in terror, some with children in their arms, and others raising their hands to heaven, calling aloud for help; while a few, bolder than the rest, leaned out of the windows and tried to fasten the outside blinds.

"There come the ants out of their holes!" cried Ciboule, stooping to pick up a stone. "We must have a fling at them for luck!"

The stone, hurled by the steady, masculine hand of the virago, went straight to its mark, and struck an unfortunate woman who was trying to close one of the shutters.

"Hit in the white!" cried the hideous creature.

"Well done, Ciboule! Bully for you!" cried a voice.

"Ciboule forever!"

"Come out, you *Devourers*, if you dare!"

"They have said a hundred times that the neighbors were too cowardly even to come and look at their house," squealed the little man with the ferret's face.

"And now they show the white feather!"

"If they will not come out," cried the quarryman, in a voice of thunder, "let us smoke them out!"

"Yes, yes!"

"Let's break open the door!"

"We are sure to find them!"

"Come on! come on!"

The crowd, with the quarryman at their head and Ciboule not far from him, brandishing a stick, advanced tumultuously toward one of the great doors. The ground shook beneath the rapid tread of the mob, which had now ceased shouting; but the confused, and, as it were,

subterraneous noise, sounded even more ominous than those savage outcries. The *Wolves* soon arrived opposite the massive oaken door.

At the moment the blaster raised a sledge-hammer, the door opened suddenly. Some of the most determined of the assailants were about to rush in at this entrance; but the quarryman stepped back, extending his arm as if to moderate their ardor and impose silence. Then his followers gathered round him.

The half-open door discovered a party of workmen, unfortunately by no means numerous, but with countenances full of resolution. They had armed themselves hastily with forks, iron bars, and clubs. Agricola, who was their leader, held in his hand a heavy sledge-hammer. The young workman was very pale; but the fire of his eye, his menacing look, and the intrepid assurance of his bearing showed that his father's blood boiled in his veins, and that in such a struggle he might become fear-inspiring. Yet he succeeded in restraining himself and challenged the quarryman in a firm voice:

"What do you want?"

"A fight!" thundered the blaster.

"Yes, yes! a fight!" repeated the crowd.

"Silence, *Wolves*!" cried the quarryman, as he turned round and stretched forth his large hand toward the multitude.

Then, addressing Agricola, he said:

"The *Wolves* have come to ask for a fight."

"With whom?"

"With the *Devourers*."

"There are no *Devourers* here," replied Agricola; "we are only peaceable workmen. So begone!"

"Well! here are the *Wolves* that will eat your quiet workmen."

"The *Wolves* will eat no one here," said Agricola, looking full at the quarryman, who approached him with a threatening air; "they can only frighten little children."

"Oh! you think so," said the quarryman, with a savage sneer. Then, raising his weapon, he shook it in Agricola's face, exclaiming:

"Is that any laughing matter?"

"Is that?" answered Agricola, with a rapid movement parrying the stone-sledge with his own hammer.

"Iron against iron — hammer against hammer; that suits me," said the quarryman.

"It does not matter what suits you," answered Agricola, hardly able to restrain himself. "You have broken our windows, frightened our women, and wounded — perhaps killed — the oldest workman in the factory, who at this moment lies bleeding in the arms of his son."

Here Agricola's voice trembled in spite of himself. "It is, I think, enough."

"No; the *Wolves* are hungry for more," answered the blaster; "you must come out — cowards that you are! — and fight us on the plain."

"Yes! yes! battle! — let them come out!" cried the crowd, howling, hissing, waving their sticks, and pushing farther into the small space which separated them from the door.

"We will have no battle," answered Agricola; "we will not leave our home; but if you have the misfortune to pass this," said Agricola, throwing his cap upon the threshold and setting his foot on it with an intrepid air, "if you pass this, you attack us in our own house, and you will be answerable for all that may happen."

"There or elsewhere we will have the fight! the *Wolves* must eat the *Devourers*. Now for the attack!" cried the fierce quarryman, raising his hammer to strike Agricola.

But the latter, throwing himself on one side by a sudden leap, avoided the blow, and struck with his hammer full at the chest of the quarryman, who staggered for a moment, but, instantly recovering his legs, rushed furiously on Agricola, crying:

"Follow me, *Wolves*!"

CHAPTER VII

THE RETURN



AS soon as the combat had begun between Agricola and the blaster, the general fight became terrible, ardent, implacable. A flood of assailants, following the quarryman's steps, rushed into the house with irresistible fury; others, unable to force their way through this dreadful crowd, where the more impetuous squeezed, stifled, and crushed those who were less so, went round in another direction, broke through some lattice-work, and thus placed the people of the factory, as it were, between two fires. Some resisted courageously; others, seeing Ciboule, followed by some of her horrible companions and by several of the most ill-looking ruffians, hastily enter that part of the common dwelling-house in which the women had taken refuge, hurried in pursuit of this band; but some of the hag's companions, having faced about and vigorously defended the entrance of the staircase against the workmen, Ciboule, with three or four like herself, and about the same number of no less ignoble men, rushed through the rooms, with the intention of robbing or destroying all that came in their way

A door, which at first resisted their efforts, was soon broken through; Ciboule rushed into the apartment with a stick in her hand, her hair disheveled, furious, and, as it were, maddened with the noise and tumult. A beautiful young girl—it was Angela—who appeared anxious to defend the entrance to a second chamber, threw herself on her knees, pale and supplicating, and raising her clasped hands exclaimed:

“Do not hurt my mother!”

“I'll serve you out first and your mother afterward,” replied the horrible woman, throwing herself on the poor girl, and endeavoring to tear her face with her nails, while the rest of the ruffianly band broke the glass and the clock with their sticks, and possessed themselves of some articles of wearing apparel.

Angela, struggling with Ciboule, uttered loud cries of distress and still attempted to guard the room in which her mother had taken refuge; while the latter, leaning from the window, called Agricola to their assistance.



The smith was now engaged with the huge blaster. In a close struggle their hammers had become useless, and with bloodshot eyes and clenched teeth, chest to chest, and limbs twined together like two

serpents, they made the most violent efforts to overthrow each other. Agricola, bent forward, held under his right arm the left leg of the quarryman, which he had seized in parrying a violent kick; but such was the herculean strength of the leader of the *Wolves*, that he remained firm as a tower, though resting only on one leg. With the hand that was still free—for the other was griped by Agricola as in a vise—he endeavored with violent blows to break the jaws of the smith, who, leaning his head forward, pressed his forehead hard against the breast of his adversary.

“The *Wolf* will break the *Devourer's* teeth, and he shall devour no more,” said the quarryman.

“You are no true *Wolf*,” answered the smith, redoubling his efforts; “the true *Wolves* are honest fellows, and do not come ten against one.

“True or false, I will break your teeth.”

“And I your paw,” said the smith, giving so violent a wrench to the leg of the quarryman that the latter uttered a cry of acute pain, and, with the rage of a wild beast, butting suddenly forward with his head, succeeded in biting Agricola in the side of the neck.

The pang of this bite forced Agricola to make a movement, which enabled the quarryman to disengage his leg. Then, with a superhuman effort, he threw himself with his whole weight on Agricola, and brought him to the ground, falling himself upon him.

At this juncture Angela's mother, leaning from one of the windows of the common dwelling-house, exclaimed, in a heart-rending voice:

“Help, Agricola! they are killing my child!”

“Let me go—and on my honor—I will fight you to-morrow, or when you will,” said Agricola, panting for breath.

“No warmed-up food for me; I eat all hot,” answered the quarryman, seizing the smith by the throat, while he tried to place one of his knees upon his chest.

“Help!—they are killing my child!” cried Angela's mother, in a voice of despair.

“Mercy! I ask mercy! Let me go!” said Agricola, making the most violent efforts to escape.

“I am too hungry,” answered the quarryman.

Exasperated by the terror which Angela's danger occasioned him, Agricola redoubled his efforts, when the quarryman suddenly felt his thigh seized by the sharp teeth of a dog, and at the same instant received from a vigorous hand three or four heavy blows with a stick upon his head. He relaxed his grasp, and fell stunned upon his hand and knee, while he mechanically raised his other arm to parry the blows, which ceased as soon as Agricola was delivered.

"Father, you have saved me!" cried the smith, springing up. "If only I am in time to rescue Angela!"

"Run!—never mind me!" answered Dagobert; and Agricola rushed into the house.

Dagobert, accompanied by *Spoilsport*, had come, as we have already said, to bring Marshal Simon's daughters to their grandfather. Arriving in the midst of the tumult, the soldier had collected a few workmen to defend the entrance of the chamber, to which the marshal's father had been carried in a dying state. It was from this post that the soldier had seen Agricola's danger.

Soon after, the rush of the conflict separated Dagobert from the quarryman, who remained for some moments insensible.

Arrived in two bounds at the common dwelling-house, Agricola succeeded in forcing his way through the men who defended the staircase, and rushed into the corridor that led to Angela's chamber. At the moment he reached it, the unfortunate girl was mechanically guarding her face with both hands against Ciboule, who, furious as the hyena over its prey, was trying to scratch and disfigure her.

To spring upon the horrible hag, seize her by her yellow hair with irresistible hand, drag her backward, and then, with one cuff, stretch her full length upon the ground was for Agricola an achievement as rapid as thought.

Furious with rage, Ciboule rose again almost instantly; but at this moment several workmen, who had followed close upon Agricola, were able to attack with advantage; and while the smith lifted the fainting form of Angela, and carried her into the next room, Ciboule and her band were driven from that part of the house.

After the first fire of the assault, the small number of real *Wolves*, who, as Agricola said, were in the main honest fellows, but had the weakness to let themselves be drawn into this enterprise, under the pretext of a quarrel between rival unions, seeing the excesses committed by the rabble who accompanied them, turned suddenly round, and ranged themselves on the side of the *Devourers*.

"There are no longer here either *Wolves* or *Devourers*," said one of the most determined *Wolves* to Olivier, with whom he had been fighting roughly and fairly; "there are none here but honest workmen, who must unite to drive out a set of scoundrels, that have come only to break and pillage."

"Yes," added another; "it was against our will that they began by breaking your windows."

"The big blaster did it all," said another; "the true *Wolves* wash their hands of him. We shall soon settle his account."

“We may fight every day—but we ought to esteem each other.”

This defection of a portion of the assailants—unfortunately but a small portion—gave new spirit to the workmen of the factory, and all together, *Wolves* and *Devourers*, though very inferior in number, opposed themselves to the band of vagabonds, who were proceeding to new excesses.

Some of these wretches, still further excited by the little man with the ferret's face, a secret emissary of Baron Tripeaud, now rushed in a mass toward the workshops of M. Hardy. Then began a lamentable devastation. These people, seized with the mania of destruction, broke without remorse machines of the greatest value and most delicate construction; half-manufactured articles were pitilessly destroyed; a savage emulation seemed to inspire these barbarians, and those workshops, so lately the model of order and well-regulated economy, were soon nothing but a wreck; the courts were strewn with fragments of all kinds of wares, which were thrown from the windows with ferocious outcries or savage bursts of laughter. Then, still thanks to the incitements of the little man with the ferret's face, the books of M. Hardy, archives of commercial industry so indispensable to the trader, were scattered to the wind, torn, trampled under foot, in a sort of infernal dance, composed of all that was most impure in this assembly of low, filthy, and ragged men and women, who held each other by the hand and whirled round and round with horrible clamor.

Strange and painful contrast! At the height of the stunning noise of these horrid deeds of tumult and devastation, a scene of imposing and mournful calm was taking place in the chamber of Marshal Simon's father, the door of which was guarded by a few devoted men. The old workman was stretched on his bed, with a bandage across his blood-stained white hair. His countenance was livid, his breathing oppressed, his look fixed and glazed.

Marshal Simon, standing at the head of the bed bending over his father, watched in despairing anguish the least sign of consciousness on the part of the dying man, near whom was a physician, with his finger on the failing pulse. Rose and Blanche, brought hither by Dagobert, were kneeling beside the bed, their hands clasped and their eyes bathed in tears; a little farther, half hidden in the shadows of the room, for the hours had passed quickly and the night was at hand, stood Dagobert himself, with his arms crossed upon his breast and his features painfully contracted. A profound and solemn silence reigned in this chamber, only interrupted by the broken sobs of Rose and Blanche, or by Father Simon's hard breathing. The eyes of the marshal were dry, gloomy, and full of fire. He only withdrew them from his father's face to interrogate the physician by a look.

There are strange coincidences in life. That physician was Dr. Baleinier. The asylum of the doctor being close to the barrier that was nearest to the factory, and his fame being widely spread in the neighborhood, they had run to fetch him on the first call for medical assistance.

Suddenly Dr. Baleinier made a movement; the marshal, who had not taken his eyes off him, exclaimed:

"Is there any hope?"

"At least, marshal, the pulse revives a little."

"He is saved!" said the marshal.

"Do not cherish false hopes," answered the doctor gravely; "the pulse revives owing to the powerful applications to the feet, but I know not what will be the issue of the crisis."

"Father! father! do you hear me?" cried the marshal, seeing the old man slightly move his head and feebly raise his eyelids.

He soon opened his eyes, and this time their intelligence had returned.

"Father, you live! you know me!" cried the marshal, giddy with joy and hope.

"Pierre! are you there?" said the old man, in a weak voice. "Your hand—give it ——" And he made a feeble movement.

"Here, father!" cried the marshal, as he pressed the hand of the old man in his own.

Then, yielding to an impulse of delight, he bent over his father, covered his hands, face, and hair with kisses, and repeated:

"He lives! kind Heaven, he lives! he is saved!"

At this instant the noise of the struggle, which had recommenced between the rabble, the *Wolves*, and the *Devourers*, reached the ears of the dying man.

"That noise! that noise!" said he; "they are fighting."

"It is growing less, I think," said the marshal, in order not to agitate his father.

"Pierre," said the old man, in a weak and broken voice, "I have not long to live."

"Father ——"

"Let me speak, child; if I can but tell you all."

"Sir," said Baleinier piously to the old workman, "Heaven may perhaps work a miracle in your favor; show yourself grateful and allow a priest ——"

"A priest! Thank you, sir; I have my son," said the old man; "in his arms I will render up my soul,—which has always been true and honest."

"You die?" exclaimed the marshal; "no! no!"

"Pierre," said the old man, in a voice which, firm at first, gradually

grew fainter, "just now—you asked my advice—in a very serious matter I think that the wish to tell you of your duty—has recalled me—for a moment—to life—for I should die miserable—if I thought you in a road unworthy of yourself and me. Listen to me, my son,—my noble son,—at this last hour a father cannot deceive himself. You have a great duty to perform—under pain—of not acting like a man of honor—under pain of neglecting my last will. You ought, without hesitation ——"

Here the voice failed the old man. When he had pronounced the last sentence he became quite unintelligible. The only words that Marshal Simon could distinguish were these :

"Napoleon II.—oath—dishonor—my son !"

Then the old workman again moved his lips mechanically, and all was over

At the moment he expired the night was quite come, and terrible shouts were heard from without of "Fire! Fire!" The conflagration had broken out in one of the workshops filled with inflammable stuff, into which had glided the little man with the ferret's face. At the same time the roll of drums was heard in the distance, announcing the arrival of a detachment of troops from town.

During an hour, in spite of every effort, the fire had been spreading through the factory.

The night is clear, cold, starlight; the wind blows keenly from the north, with a moaning sound. A man walking across the fields, where the rising ground conceals the fire from him, advances with slow and unsteady steps. It is M. Hardy. He had chosen to return home on foot across the country, hoping that a walk would calm the fever in his blood—an icy fever, more like the chill of death. He had not been deceived. His adored mistress—the noble woman with whom he might have found refuge from the consequences of the fearful deception which had just been revealed to him—had quitted France. He could have no doubt of it. Margaret was gone to America. Her mother had exacted from her, in expiation of her fault, that she should not even write to him one word of farewell—to him, for whom she had sacrificed her duty as a wife. Margaret had obeyed.

Besides, she had often said to him :

"Between my mother and you, I should not hesitate."

She had not hesitated. There was therefore no hope, not the slightest; even if an ocean had not separated him from Margaret, he knew enough of her blind submission to her mother to be certain that all relations between them were broken off forever.

It is well. He will no longer reckon upon this heart — his last refuge. The two roots of his life have been torn up and broken with the same blow, the same day, almost at the same moment. What then remains for thee, poor sensitive plant, as thy tender mother used to call thee? What remains to console thee for the loss of this last love — this last friendship, so infamously crushed.

Oh! there remains for thee that one corner of the earth, created after the image of thy mind — that little colony, so peaceful and flourishing, where, thanks to thee, labor brings with it joy and recompense. Those worthy artisans, whom thou hast made happy, good, and grateful, will not fail thee. That also is a great and holy affection; let it be thy shelter in the midst of this frightful wreck of all thy most sacred convictions! The calm of that cheerful and pleasant retreat, the sight of the unequalled happiness of thy dependents, will soothe thy poor, suffering soul, which now seems to live only for suffering.

Come! you will soon reach the top of the hill, from which you can see afar, in the plain below, that paradise of workmen, of which you are the presiding divinity.

M. Hardy had reached the summit of the hill.

At that moment the conflagration, repressed for a short time, burst forth with redoubled fury from the common dwelling-house, which it had now reached. A bright streak, at first white, then red, then copper-colored, illuminated the distant horizon.

M. Hardy looked at it with a sort of incredulous, almost idiotic stupor. Suddenly an immense column of flame shot up in the thick of a cloud of smoke, accompanied by a shower of sparks, and streamed toward the sky, casting a bright reflection over all the country, even to M. Hardy's feet. The violence of the north-wind, driving the flames in waves before it, soon brought to the ears of M. Hardy the hurried clanging of the alarm-bell of the burning factory

PART XV

RODIN UNMASKED

CHAPTER I

THE GO-BETWEEN



FEW days have elapsed since the conflagration of M. Hardy's factory. The following scene takes place in the Rue Clovis, in the house where Rodin had lodged, and which was still inhabited by Rose-Pompon, who, without the least scruple, availed herself of the household arrangements of her friend Philemon.

It was about noon, and Rose-Pompon, alone in the chamber of the student, who was still absent, was breakfasting very gaily by the fireside; but how singular a breakfast! what a queer fire! how strange an apartment!

Imagine a large room, lighted by two windows without curtains — for as they looked on empty space the lodger had no fear of being overlooked. One side of this apartment served as a wardrobe, for there was suspended Rose-Pompon's flashy costume of *débardeur*, not far from the boatman's jacket of Philemon, with his large trousers of coarse gray stuff, covered with pitch (*shiver my timbers!*), just as if this intrepid mariner had bunked in the forecastle of a frigate during a voyage round the globe. A gown of Rose-Pompon's hung gracefully over a pair of pantaloons, the legs of which seemed to come from beneath the petticoat. On the lowest of several book-shelves, very dusty and neglected, by the side of three old boots — wherefore *three* boots? — and a number

of empty bottles, stood a skull, a scientific and friendly souvenir, left to Philemon by one of his comrades, a medical student. With a species of pleasantry very much to the taste of the student-world, a clay pipe with a very black bowl was placed between the magnificently white teeth of this skull; moreover, its shining top was half hidden beneath an old hat, set knowingly on one side, and adorned with faded flowers and ribbons. When Philemon was drunk he used to contemplate this bony emblem of mortality, and break out into the most poetical monologues with regard to this philosophical contrast between death and the mad pleasures of life. Two or three plaster casts, with their noses and chins more or less injured, were fastened to the wall, and bore witness to the temporary curiosity which Philemon had felt with regard to phrenological science, from the patient and serious study of which he had drawn the following logical conclusion: That, having to an alarming extent the bump of getting into debt, he ought to resign himself to the fatality of his organization, and accept the inconvenience of creditors as a vital necessity. On the chimney-piece stood uninjured, in all its majesty, the magnificent rowing-club drinking-glass, a china tea-pot without a spout, and an ink-stand of black wood, the glass mouth of which was covered by a coat of greenish and mossy mold.

From time to time the silence of this retreat was interrupted by the cooing of pigeons, which Rose-Pompon had established with cordial hospitality in the little study

Chilly as a quail, Rose-Pompon crept close to the fire, and at the same time seemed to enjoy the warmth of a bright ray of sunshine, which enveloped her in its golden light. This droll little creature was dressed in the oddest costume, which, however, displayed to advantage the freshness of her piquant and pretty countenance, crowned with its fine, fair hair, always neatly combed and arranged the first thing in the morning. By way of dressing-gown, Rose-Pompon had ingeniously drawn over her linen the ample scarlet flannel shirt which belonged to Philemon's official garb in the rowing-club; the collar, open and turned down, displayed the whiteness of the young girl's under-garment, as also of her neck and shoulders, on whose firm and polished surface the scarlet shirt seemed to cast a rosy light. The grisette's fresh and dimpled arms half protruded from the large, turned-up sleeves; and her charming legs were also half visible, crossed one over the other, and clothed in neat white stockings and boots. A black silk cravat formed the girdle which fastened the shirt round the wasp-like waist of Rose-Pompon, just above those hips, worthy of the enthusiasm of a modern Phidias, and which gave to this style of dress a grace very original.

We have said that the breakfast of Rose-Pompon was singular. You shall judge. On a little table placed before her was a wash-hand-basin into which she had recently plunged her fresh face, bathing it in



pure water. From the bottom of this basin, now transformed into a salad-bowl, Rose-Pompon took with the tips of her fingers large green leaves, dripping with vinegar, and crunched them between her tiny white teeth, whose enamel was too hard to allow them to be set on edge.

Her drink was a glass of water and syrup of gooseberries, which she stirred with a wooden mustard-spoon. Finally, as an extra dish, she had a dozen olives in one of those blue glass trinket-dishes sold for twenty-five sous. Her dessert was composed of nuts, which she prepared to roast on a red-hot shovel. That Rose-Pompon, with such an unaccountable savage choice of food, should retain a freshness of complexion worthy of her name is one of those miracles which reveal the mighty power of youth and health.

When she had eaten her salad, Rose-Pompon was about to begin upon her olives, when a low knock was heard at the door, which was modestly bolted on the inside.

"Who is there?" said Rose-Pompon.

"A friend — the oldest of the old," replied a sonorous, jovial voice. "Why do you lock yourself in?"

"What! is it you, Nini Moulin?"

"Yes, my beloved pupil. Open quickly Time presses."

"Open to you? Oh, I dare say — that would be pretty, the figure I am!"

"I believe you! what does it matter what figure you are? It would be very pretty, thou rosiest of all the roses with which Cupid ever adorned his quiver!"

"Go and preach fasting and morality in your journal, fat apostle!" said Rose-Pompon, as she restored the scarlet shirt to its place, with Philemon's other garments.

"I say! are we to talk much longer through the door, for the greater edification of our neighbors?" cried Nini Moulin. "I have something of importance to tell you — something that will astonish you —"

"Give me time to put on my gown, great plague that you are!"

"If it is because of my modesty, do not think of it. I am not over nice. I should like you very well as you are."

"Only to think that such a monster is the favorite of all the church-goers!" said Rose-Pompon, opening the door as she finished fastening her dress.

"So! you have at last returned to the dovecote, you stray bird!" said Nini Moulin, folding his arms, and looking at Rose-Pompon with comic seriousness. "And where may you have been, I pray? For three days the naughty little bird has left its nest."

"True; I only returned home last night. You must have called during my absence?"

"I came every day, and even twice a day, young lady, for I have very serious matters to communicate."

"Very serious matters? Then we shall have a good laugh at them."

"Not at all — they are really serious," said Nini Moulin, seating himself. "But, first of all, what did you do during the three days that you left your conjugal and Philemonic home? I must know all about it, before I tell you more."

"Will you have some olives?" said Rose-Pompon, as she nibbled one of them herself.

"Is that your answer? — I understand! — Unfortunate Philemon!"

"There is no unfortunate Philemon in the case, slanderer. Clara had a death in her house, and for the first few days after the funeral she was afraid to sleep alone."

"I thought Clara sufficiently provided against such fears."

"There you are deceived, you great viper! I was obliged to go and keep the poor girl company."

At this assertion, the religious pamphleteer hummed a tune, with an incredulous and mocking air.

"You think I have played Philemon tricks?" cried Rose-Pompon, cracking a nut with the indignation of injured innocence.

"I do not say tricks; but one little rose-colored trick."

"I tell you that it was not for my pleasure I went out. On the contrary — for, during my absence, poor Cephyse disappeared."

"Yes, Mother Arsène told me that the Bacchanal Queen was gone on a journey. But when I talk of Philemon, you talk of Cephyse; we don't progress."

"May I be eaten by the black panther that they are showing at the Porte Saint-Martin if I do not tell you the truth. And, talking of that, you must get tickets to take me to see those animals, my little Nini Moulin? They tell me there never were such darling wild beasts."

"Now, really, are you mad?"

"Why so?"

"That I should guide your youth, like a venerable patriarch, through the dangers of the *Full-blown Tulip*, all well and good — I ran no risk of meeting my pastors and masters; but were I to take you to a Lent spectacle (since there are only beasts to be seen), I might just run against my churchwardens — and how pretty I should look with you on my arm!"

"You can put on a false nose, and straps to your trousers, my big Nini; they will never know you."

"We must not think of false noses, but of what I have to tell you, since you assure me that you have no intrigue in hand."

"I swear it!" said Rose-Pompon solemnly, extending her left hand horizontally, while with her right she put a nut into her mouth. Then she added, with surprise, as she looked at the outside coat of Nini Moulin:

"Goodness gracious! what full pockets you have got! What is there in them?"

"Something that concerns you, Rose-Pompon," said Dumoulin gravely.

"Me?"

"Rose-Pompon!" said Nini Moulin suddenly, with a majestic air; "will you have a carriage? Will you inhabit a charming apartment, instead of living in this dreadful hole? Will you be dressed like a duchess?"

"Now for some more nonsense! Come, will you eat the olives? If not, I shall eat them all up. There is only one left."

Without answering this gastronomic offer, Nini Moulin felt in one of his pockets, and drew from it a case containing a very pretty bracelet, which he held up sparkling before the eyes of the young girl.

"Oh! what a sumptuous bracelet!" cried she, clapping her hands. "A green-eyed serpent biting his tail—the emblem of my love for Philemon."

"Do not talk of Philemon; it annoys me," said Nini Moulin, as he clasped the bracelet round the wrist of Rose-Pompon, who allowed him to do it, laughing all the while like mad, and saying to him, "So you've been employed to make a purchase, big apostle, and you wish to see the effect of it. Well! it is charming!"

"Rose-Pompon," resumed Nini Moulin, "would you like to have a servant, a box at the Opera, and a thousand francs a month for your pin-money?"

"Always the same nonsense. Get along!" said the young girl as she held up the bracelet to the light, still continuing to eat her nuts. "Why always the same farce, and no change of bills?"

Nini Moulin again plunged his hand into his pocket, and this time drew forth an elegant chain, which he hung round Rose-Pompon's neck.

"Oh! what a beautiful chain!" cried the young girl, as she looked by turns at the sparkling ornament and the religious writer. "If you chose that also, you have a very good taste. But am I not a good-natured girl to be your *dummy*, just to show off your jewels?"

"Rose-Pompon," returned Nini Moulin, with a still more majestic air, "these trifles are nothing to what you may obtain, if you will but follow the advice of your old friend."

Rose began to look at Dumoulin with surprise, and said to him:

"What does all this mean, Nini Moulin? Explain yourself; what advice have you to give?"

Dumoulin did not answer, but replunging his hand into his inexhaustible pocket, he fished up a parcel, which he carefully unfolded, and in which was a magnificent mantilla of black lace.

Rose-Pompon started up, full of new admiration, and Dumoulin threw the rich mantilla over the young girl's shoulders.

"It is superb? I have never seen anything like it! What patterns! what work!" said Rose-Pompon, as she examined all with simple and perfectly disinterested curiosity. Then she added, "Your pocket is like a shop; where did you get all these pretty things?" Then, bursting into a fit of laughter, which brought the blood to her cheeks, she exclaimed, "Oh, I have it! These are the wedding-presents for Madame de la Sainte-Colombe. I congratulate you; they are very choice."

"And where do you suppose I should find money to buy these wonders?" said Nini Moulin. "I repeat to you, all this is yours if you will but listen to me!"

"How is this?" said Rose-Pompon, with the utmost amazement; "is what you tell me in downright earnest?"

"In downright earnest."

"This offer to make me a great lady?"

"The jewels might convince you of the reality of my offers."

"And you propose all this to me for some one else, my poor Nini Moulin?"

"One moment," said the religious writer, with a comical air of modesty, "you must know me well enough, my beloved pupil, to feel certain that I should be incapable of inducing you to commit an improper action. I respect myself too much for that—leaving out the consideration that it would be unfair to Philemon, who confided to me the guardianship of your virtue."

"Then, Nini Moulin," said Rose-Pompon, more and more astonished, "on my word of honor, I can make nothing of it."

"Yet, 'tis all simple, and I ——"

"Oh! I've found it," cried Rose-Pompon, interrupting Nini Moulin; "it is some gentleman who offers me his hand, his heart, and all the rest of it. Could you not tell me that directly?"

"A marriage? oh, laws, yes!" said Dumoulin, shrugging his shoulders.

"What! is it not a marriage?" said Rose-Pompon, again much surprised.

"No."

"And the offers you make me are honest ones, my big apostle?"

"They could not be more so." Here Dumoulin spoke the truth.

"I shall not have to be unfaithful to Philemon?"

"No."

"Or faithful to any one else?"

"No."

Rose-Pompon looked confounded. Then she rattled on:

"Come, do not let us have any joking! I am not foolish enough to imagine that I am to live just like a duchess, just for nothing. What, therefore, must I give in return?"

"Nothing at all."

"Nothing?"

"Not even that," said Nini Moulin, biting his nail-tip.

"But what am I to do, then?"

"Dress yourself as handsomely as possible, take your ease, amuse yourself, ride about in a carriage. You see, it is not very fatiguing—and you will, moreover, help to do a good action."

"What! by living like a duchess?"

"Yes! so make up your mind. Do not ask me for any more details, for I cannot give them to you. For the rest you will not be detained against your will. Just try the life I propose to you. If it suits you, go on with it; if not, return to your Philemonic household."

"In fact ——"

"Only try it. What can you risk?"

"Nothing; but I can hardly believe that all you say is true. And then," added she, with hesitation, "I do not know if I ought ——"

Nini Moulin went to the window, opened it, and said to Rose-Pompon, who ran up to it:

"Look there! before the door of the house."

"What a pretty carriage! How comfortable a body'd be inside of it!"

"That carriage is yours. It is waiting for you."

"Waiting for me!" exclaimed Rose-Pompon; "am I to decide as short as that?"

"Or not at all."

"To-day?"

"On the instant."

"But where will they take me?"

"How should I know?"

"You do not know where they will take me?"

"Not I," and Dumoulin still spoke the truth; "the coachman has his orders."

"Do you know all this is very funny, Nini Moulin?"

"I believe you. If it were not funny, where would be the pleasure?"

"You are right."

"Then you accept the offer? That is well. I am delighted both for you and myself."

"For yourself?"

"Yes; because in accepting you render me a great service."



"You? How so?"

"It matters little, as long as I feel obliged to you."

"True."

"Come, then, let us set out!"

"Bah! after all, they cannot eat me," said Rose-Pompon resolutely

With a skip and a jump, she went to fetch a rose-colored cap, and, going up to a broken looking-glass, placed the cap very much cocked on one side on her bands of light hair. This left uncovered her snowy neck, with the silky roots of the hair behind, and gave to her pretty face a very mischievous, not to say licentious expression.

"My cloak!" said she to Nini Moulin, who seemed to be relieved from a considerable amount of uneasiness since she had accepted his offer.

"Fie! a cloak will not do," answered her companion, feeling once more in his pocket, and drawing out a fine cashmere shawl, which he threw over Rose-Pompon's shoulders.

"A cashmere!" cried the young girl, trembling with pleasure and joyous surprise.

Then she added, with an air of heroism:

"It is settled! I will run the gauntlet."

And with a light step she descended the stairs, followed by Nini Moulin.

The worthy green-grocer was at her post.

"Good-morning, mademoiselle; you are early to-day," said she to the young girl.

"Yes, Mother Arsène; there is my key."

"Thank you, mademoiselle."

"Oh! now I think of it," said Rose-Pompon suddenly, in a whisper, as she turned toward Nini Moulin, and withdrew farther from the portress, "what is to become of Philemon?"

"Philemon?"

"If he should arrive ——"

"Oh! the devil!" said Nini Moulin, scratching his ear.

"Yes; if Philemon should arrive, what will they say to him? for I may be a long time absent."

"Three or four months, I suppose."

"Not more?"

"I should think not."

"Oh, very good!" said Rose-Pompon. Then turning toward the green-grocer, she said to her, after a moment's reflection:

"Mother Arsène, if Philemon should come home, you will tell him I have gone out—on business."

"Yes, mademoiselle."

“And that he must not forget to feed my pigeons, which are in his study ”

“Yes, mademoiselle.”

“Good-bye, Mother Arsène.”

“Good-bye, mademoiselle.” And Rose-Pompon entered the carriage in triumph, along with Nini Moulin.

“The devil take me if I know what is to come of all this,” said Jacques Dumoulin to himself, as the carriage drove rapidly down the Rue Clovis. “I have repaired my error, and now I laugh at the rest.”

.

CHAPTER II

THE SECRET

THE following scene took place a few days after the abduction of Rose-Pompon by Nini Moulin.

Mademoiselle de Cardoville was seated, in a dreamy mood, in her cabinet, which was hung with green silk, and furnished with an ebony library ornamented with large bronze caryatides. By some significant signs one could perceive that Mademoiselle de Cardoville had sought in the fine arts some relief from sad and serious thoughts. Near an open piano was a harp, placed before a music-stand. A little farther, on a table covered with boxes of oil and water-color, were several brilliant sketches. Most of them represented Asiatic scenes lighted by the fires of an oriental sun. Faithful to her fancy of dressing herself at home in a picturesque style, Mademoiselle de Cardoville resembled that day one of those proud portraits of Velasquez, with stern and noble aspect. Her gown was of black moire, with wide-swelling petticoat, long waist, and sleeve slashed with rose-colored satin, fastened together with jet bugles. A very stiff Spanish ruff reached almost to her chin, and was secured round her neck by a broad rose-colored ribbon. This frill, slightly heaving, sloped down as far as the graceful swell of the rose-colored stomacher, laced with strings of jet beads, and terminating in a point at the waist. It is impossible to express how well this black garment, with its ample and shining folds, relieved with rose color and brilliant jet, harmonized with the shining whiteness of Adrienne's skin and the golden flood of her beautiful hair, whose long, silky ringlets descended to her bosom.

The young lady was in a half-recumbent posture, with her elbow resting on a couch covered with green silk. The back of this piece of furniture, which was pretty high toward the fireplace, sloped down insensibly toward the foot. A sort of light, semicircular trellis-work in gilded bronze, raised about five feet from the ground, covered with flowering plants (the admirable *passiflores quadrangulatæ*, planted in a

deep ebony box, from the center of which rose the trellis-work), surrounded this couch with a sort of screen of foliage, enameled with large flowers, green without, purple within, and as brilliant as those flowers of porcelain which we receive from Saxony. A sweet, faint perfume, like a faint mixture of jasmine with violet, rose from the cup of these admirable *passiflores*.

Strange enough, a large quantity of new books (Adrienne having bought them since the last two or three days), and quite fresh-cut, were scattered around her on a couch and on a little table; while other larger volumes, amongst which were several atlases full of engravings, were piled on the sumptuous fur, which formed the carpet beneath the divan. Stranger still, these books, though of different forms and by different authors, all treated of the same subject.

The posture of Adrienne revealed a sort of melancholy dejection. Her cheeks were pale; a light-blue circle surrounded her large black eyes, now half closed, and gave to them an expression of profound grief. Many causes contributed to this sorrow; amongst others, the disappearance of Mother Bunch. Without absolutely believing the perfidious insinuations of Rodin, who gave her to understand that, in the fear of being unmasked by him, the hunchback had not dared to remain in the house, Adrienne felt a cruel sinking of the heart when she thought how this young girl, in whom she had had so much confidence, had fled from her almost sisterly hospitality without even uttering a word of gratitude; for care had been taken not to show her the few lines written by the poor needle-woman to her benefactress just before her departure. She had only been told of the note for five hundred francs found on her desk; and this last inexplicable circumstance had contributed to awaken cruel suspicions in the breast of Mademoiselle de Cardoville. She already felt the fatal effects of that mistrust of everything and everybody which Rodin had recommended to her; and this sentiment of suspicion and reserve had the more tendency to become powerful that, for the first time in her life, Mademoiselle de Cardoville, until then a stranger to all deception, had a secret to conceal—a secret which was equally her happiness, her shame, and her torment.

Half recumbent on her divan, pensive and depressed, Adrienne pursued, with a mind often absent, one of her newly purchased books. Suddenly she uttered an exclamation of surprise; the hand which held the book trembled like a leaf, and from that moment she appeared to read with passionate attention and devouring curiosity. Soon her eyes sparkled with enthusiasm, her smile assumed ineffable sweetness, and she seemed at once proud, happy, delighted; but, as she turned over the last page, her countenance expressed disappointment and chagrin.

Then she recommenced this reading which had occasioned her such sweet emotion, and this time she read with the most deliberate slowness, going over each page twice, and spelling, as it were, every line, every word. From time to time she paused, and in a pensive mood, with her forehead leaning on her fair hand, she seemed to reflect in a deep reverie on the passages she had read with such tender and religious love. Arriving at a passage which so affected her that a tear started in her eye, she suddenly turned the volume to see on the cover the name of the author. For a few seconds she contemplated this name with a singular expression of gratitude, and could not forbear raising to her rosy lips the page on which it was printed. After reading many times over the lines with which she had been so much struck, forgetting, no doubt, the letter in the spirit, she began to reflect so deeply that the book glided from her hand and fell upon the carpet.

During the course of this reverie the eyes of the young girl rested, at first mechanically, upon an admirable bas-relief, placed on an ebony stand near one of the windows. This magnificent bronze, recently cast after a plaster copy from the antique, represented the triumph of the Indian Bacchus. Never perhaps had Grecian art attained such rare perfection.

The youthful conqueror, half clad in a lion's skin, which displayed his juvenile grace and charming purity of form, shone with divine beauty. Standing up in a car, drawn by two tigers, with an air at once gentle and proud, he leaned with one hand upon a thyrsus, and with the other guided his savage steeds in tranquil majesty. By this rare mixture of grace, vigor, and serenity, it was easy to recognize the hero who had waged such desperate combats with men and with monsters of the forest. Thanks to the brownish tone of the figure, the light, falling from one side of the sculpture, admirably displayed the form of the youthful god, which, carved in relievo, and thus illumined, shone like a magnificent statue of pale gold upon the dark fretted background of the bronze.

When Adrienne's look first rested on this rare assemblage of divine perfections, her countenance was calm and thoughtful. But this contemplation, at first mechanical, became gradually more and more attentive and conscious, and the young lady, rising suddenly from her seat, slowly approached the bas-relief as if yielding to the invincible attraction of an extraordinary resemblance. Then a slight blush appeared on the cheeks of Mademoiselle de Cardoville, stole across her face, and spread rapidly to her neck and forehead. She approached still closer, threw round a hasty glance, as if half ashamed or as if she had feared to be surprised in a blamable action, and twice stretched forth her

hand, trembling with emotion, to touch with the tips of her charming fingers the bronze forehead of the Indian Bacchus.

And twice she stopped short, with a kind of modest hesitation.

At last the temptation became too strong for her. She yielded to it; and her alabaster finger, after delicately caressing the features of pale gold, was pressed more boldly for an instant on the pure and noble brow of the youthful god. At this pressure, though so slight, Adrienne seemed to feel a sort of electric shock; she trembled in every limb, her eyes languished, and, after swimming for an instant in their humid and brilliant crystal, were raised, half closed, to heaven. Then her head was thrown a little way back, her knees bent insensibly, her rosy lips were half opened, as if to give a passage to her heated breath, for her bosom heaved violently, as though youth and life had accelerated the pulsations of her heart, and made her blood boil in her veins. Finally, the burning cheeks of Adrienne betrayed a species of ecstasy, timid and passionate, chaste and sensual, the expression of which was ineffably touching.

An affecting spectacle indeed is that of a young maiden whose modest brow flushes with the first fires of a secret passion. Does not the Creator of all things animate the body as well as the soul with a spark of divine energy? Should he not be religiously glorified in the intellect as in the senses, with which he has so paternally endowed his creatures? They are impious blasphemers who seek to stifle the celestial senses, instead of guiding and harmonizing them in their divine flight.

Suddenly Mademoiselle de Cardoville started, raised her head, opened her eyes as if awaking from a dream, withdrew abruptly from the sculptures, and walked several times up and down the room in an agitated manner, pressing her burning hands to her forehead. Then, falling, as it were, exhausted on her seat, her tears flowed in abundance. The most bitter grief was visible in her features, which revealed the fatal struggle that was passing within her. By degrees her tears ceased. To this crisis of painful dejection succeeded a species of violent scorn and indignation against herself, which were expressed by these words that escaped her:

“For the first time in my life I feel weak and cowardly. Oh, yes! cowardly — very cowardly!”

The sound of a door opening and closing roused Mademoiselle de Cardoville from her bitter reflections. Georgette entered the room and said to her mistress: “Mademoiselle, can you receive the Count de Montbron?”

Adrienne, too well bred to exhibit before her women the sort of impatience occasioned by this unseasonable visit, said to Georgette :

"You told M. de Montbron that I was at home?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"Then beg him to walk in."

Though Mademoiselle de Cardoville felt at that moment much vexed at the arrival of Montbron, let us hasten to say that she entertained for him an almost filial affection and a profound esteem, though, by a not unfrequent contrast, she almost always differed from him in opinion. Hence arose, when Mademoiselle de Cardoville had nothing to disturb her mind, the most gay and animated discussions, in which M. de Montbron, notwithstanding his mocking and skeptical humor, his long experience, his rare knowledge of men and things, his fashionable training, in a word, had not always the advantage, and even acknowledged his defeat gayly enough. Thus, to give an idea of the differences of the count and Adrienne, before, as he would say laughingly, he had made himself her accomplice, he had always opposed (from other motives than those alleged by Madame de Saint-Dizier) Adrienne's wish to live alone and in her own way; while Rodin, on the contrary, by investing the young girl's resolve on this subject with an ideal grandeur of intention, had acquired a species of influence over her.

M. de Montbron, now upward of sixty years of age, had been a most prominent character during the Directory, Consulate, and the Empire. His prodigal style of living, his wit, his gayety, his duels, his amours, and his losses at play had given him a leading influence in the best society of his day; while his character, his kind-heartedness, and liberality secured him the lasting friendship of nearly all his female friends. At the time we now present him to the reader, he was still a great gambler, and, moreover, a very lucky gambler. He had, as we have stated, a very lordly style; his manners were decided, but polished and lively; his habits were such as belong to the higher classes of society, though he could be excessively sharp toward people whom he did not like. He was tall and thin, and his slim figure gave him an almost youthful appearance; his forehead was high and a little bald; his hair was gray and short, his countenance long, his nose aquiline, his eyes blue and piercing, and his teeth white, and still very good.

"The Count de Montbron," said Georgette, opening the door.

The count entered and hastened to kiss Adrienne's hand, with a sort of paternal familiarity

"Come!" said M. de Montbron to himself; "let us try to discover the truth I am in search of, that we may escape a great misfortune."

CHAPTER III

THE CONFESSION

MADEMOISELLE DE CARDOVILLE, not wishing to betray the cause of the violent feelings which agitated her, received M. de Montbron with a feigned and forced gayety. On the other hand, notwithstanding his tact and knowledge of the world the count was much embarrassed how to enter upon the subject on which he wished to confer with Adrienne, and he resolved to feel his way, before seriously commencing the conversation.

After looking at the young lady for some seconds, M. de Montbron shook his head and said, with a sigh of regret :

“My dear child, I am not pleased.”

“Some affair of the heart, or of *hearts*, my dear count ?” returned Adrienne, smiling.

“Of the heart,” said M. de Montbron.

“What ! you, so great a player, think more of a woman’s whim than a throw of the dice ?”

“I have a heavy heart, and you are the cause of it, my dear child.”

“M. de Montbron, you will make me very proud,” said Adrienne, with a smile.

“You would be wrong, for I tell you plainly my trouble is caused by your neglect of your beauty. Yes, your countenance is pale, dejected, sorrowful; you have been low-spirited for the last few days; you have something on your mind, I am sure of it.”

“My dear de Montbron, you have so much penetration that you may be allowed to fail for once, as now. I am not sad, I have nothing on my mind, and — I am about to utter a very silly piece of impertinence — I have never thought myself so pretty.”

“On the contrary, nothing could be more modest than such an assertion. Who told you that falsehood ? a woman ?”

“No ; it was my heart, and it spoke the truth,” answered Adrienne, with a slight degree of emotion. “Understand it, if you can,” she added.

"Do you mean that you are proud of the alteration in your features because you are proud of the sufferings of your heart?" said M. de Montbron, looking at Adrienne with attention. "Be it so; I am then



right; you have some sorrow — I persist in it," added the count, speaking with a tone of real feeling, "because it is painful to me."

"Be satisfied; I am as happy as possible; for every instant I take delight in repeating, how, at my age, I am free — absolutely free!"

"Yes; free to torment yourself, free to be miserable."

"Come, come, my dear count!" said Adrienne, "you are recommencing our old quarrel. I still find in you the ally of my aunt and the Abbé d'Aigrigny."

"Yes, as the republicans are the allies of the legitimists — to destroy each other in their turn. Talking of your abominable aunt, they say that she holds a sort of council at her house these last few days, a regular mitered conspiracy. She is certainly in a good way."

"Why not? Formerly she would have wished to be Goddess of Reason; now we shall perhaps see her canonized. She has already performed the first part of the life of Mary Magdalen."

"You can never speak worse of her than she deserves, my dear child. Still, though for quite opposite reasons, I agreed with her on the subject of your wish to reside alone."

"I know it."

"Yes; and because I wished to see you a thousand times freer than you really are, I advised you —"

"To marry"

"No doubt; you would have had your dear liberty, with its consequences, only, instead of Mademoiselle de Cardoville, we should have called you Madame Somebody, having found an excellent husband to be responsible for your independence."

"And who would have been responsible for this ridiculous husband? And who would bear a mocked and degraded name? I, perhaps?" said Adrienne, with animation. "No, no, my dear count, good or ill, I will answer for my own actions; to my name shall attach the reputation, which I alone have formed. I am as incapable of basely dishonoring a name which is not mine as of continually bearing it myself, if it were not held in esteem. And, as one can only answer for one's own actions, I prefer to keep my name."

"You are the only person in the world that has such ideas."

"Why?" said Adrienne, laughing. "Because it appears to me horrible, to see a poor young girl lost and buried in some ugly and selfish man, and become, as they say seriously, the better half of the monster—yes! a fresh and blooming rose to become part of a frightful thistle!—Come, my dear count; confess there is something odious in this conjugal metempsychosis," added Adrienne, with a burst of laughter.

The forced and somewhat feverish gayety of Adrienne contrasted painfully with her pale and suffering countenance; it was so easy to see that she strove to stifle with laughter some deep sorrow that M. de Montbron was much affected by it; but, dissembling his emotion, he

appeared to reflect a moment, and took up mechanically one of the new, fresh-cut books, by which Adrienne was surrounded. After casting a careless glance at this volume, he continued, still dissembling his feelings:

"Come, my dear madcap; this is another folly. Suppose I were twenty years old, and that you did me the honor to marry me—you would be called Madame de Montbron, I imagine?"

"Perhaps."

"How perhaps? Would you not bear my name, if you married me?"

"My dear count," said Adrienne, with a smile, "do not let us pursue this hypothesis, which can only leave us—regrets."

Suddenly M. de Montbron started, and looked at Mademoiselle de Cardoville with an expression of surprise. For some moments, while talking to Adrienne, he had mechanically taken up two or three of the volumes scattered over the couch, and had glanced at their titles in the same careless manner. The first was the *Modern History of India*. The second, *Travels in India*. The third, *Letters on India*. Much surprised, M. de Montbron had continued his investigation, and found that the fourth volume continued this Indian nomenclature, being *Rambles in India*. The fifth was, *Recollections of Hindostan*. The sixth, *Notes of a Traveler in the East Indies*.

Hence the astonishment, which, for many serious reasons, M. de Montbron had no longer been able to conceal, and which his looks betrayed to Adrienne. The latter, having completely forgotten the presence of the accusing volumes by which she was surrounded, yielded to a movement of involuntary confusion, and blushed slightly; but, her firm and resolute character again coming to her aid, she looked full at M. de Montbron, and said to him:

"Well, my dear count! what surprises you?"

Instead of answering, M. de Montbron appeared still more absorbed in thought, and contemplating the young girl, he could not forbear saying to himself: "No, no—it is impossible; and yet——"

"It would, perhaps, be indiscreet in me to listen to your soliloquy, my dear count," said Adrienne.

"Excuse me, my dear child; but what I see surprises me so much——"

"And pray what do you see?"

"The traces of so great and novel an interest in all that relates to India," said M. de Montbron, laying a slight stress on his words and fixing a piercing look upon the young girl.

"Well!" said Adrienne stoutly.

"Well! I seek the cause of this sudden passion——"

"Geographical!" said Mademoiselle de Cardoville, interrupting M.

de Montbron. "You may find this taste somewhat serious for my age, my dear count, but one must find occupation for leisure hours; and then, having a cousin who is both an Indian and a prince, I should like to know something of the fortunate country from which I derive this savage relationship."

These last words were pronounced with a bitterness that was not lost on M. de Montbron. Watching Adrienne attentively, he observed:

"Meseems, you speak of the prince with some harshness."

"No; I speak of him with indifference."

"Yet he deserves a very different feeling."

"On the part of some other person, perhaps," replied Adrienne dryly.

"He is so unhappy!" said M. de Montbron, in a tone of sincere pity.

"When I saw him the other day, he made my heart ache."

"What have I to do with it?" exclaimed Adrienne, with an accent of painful and almost angry impatience.

"I should have thought that his cruel torments at least deserved your pity," answered the count gravely.

"Pity—from me!" cried Adrienne, with an air of offended pride. Then, restraining herself, she added coldly:

"You are jesting, M. de Montbron. It is not in sober seriousness that you ask me to take interest in the amorous torments of your prince."

There was so much cold disdain in these last words of Adrienne, her pale and agitated countenance betrayed such haughty bitterness, that M. de Montbron said sorrowfully:

"It is then true; I have not been deceived. I who thought, from our old and constant friendship, that I had some claim to your confidence, have known nothing of it—while you told all to another. It is painful, very painful to me."

"I do not understand you, M. de Montbron."

"Well, then, since I must speak plainly," cried the count, "there is, I see, no hope for this unhappy boy—you love another."

As Adrienne started—

"Oh! you cannot deny it," resumed the count; "your paleness and melancholy for the last few days, your implacable indifference to the prince—all prove to me that you are in love."

Hurt by the manner in which the count spoke of the sentiment he attributed to her, Mademoiselle de Cardoville answered with dignified stateliness:

"You must know, M. de Montbron, that a secret discovered is not a confidence. Your language surprises me."

"Oh, my dear friend, if I use the poor privilege of experience—if I guess that you are in love—if I tell you so, and even go so far as to

reproach you with it, it is because the life or death of this poor prince is concerned; and I feel for him as if he were my son, for it is impossible to know him without taking the warmest interest in him."

"It would be singular," returned Adrienne, with redoubled coldness and still more bitter irony, "if my love—admitting I were in love—could have any such strange influence on Prince Djalma. What can it matter to him?" added she, with almost agonizing disdain.

"What can it matter to him? Now, really, my dear friend, permit me to tell you that it is you who are jesting cruelly. What! this unfortunate youth loves you with all the blind ardor of a first love—twice has attempted to terminate by suicide the horrible tortures of his passion—and you think it strange that your love for another should be with him a question of life or death!"

"He loves me then?" cried the young girl, with an accent impossible to describe.

"He loves you to madness, I tell you; I have seen it."

Adrienne seemed overcome with amazement. From pale she became crimson; as the redness disappeared her lips grew white and trembled. Her emotion was so strong that she remained for some moments unable to speak, and pressed her hand to her heart, as if to moderate its pulsations.

M. de Montbron, almost frightened at the sudden change in Adrienne's countenance, hastily approached her, exclaiming:

"Good Heaven, my poor child! what is the matter?"

Instead of answering, Adrienne waved her hand to him, in sign that he should not be alarmed; and, in fact, the count was speedily tranquilized, for the beautiful face, which had so lately been contracted with pain, irony, and scorn, seemed now expressive of the sweetest and most ineffable emotions; Adrienne appeared to luxuriate in delight, and to fear losing the least particle of it; then, as reflection told her that she was perhaps the dupe of illusion or falsehood, she exclaimed suddenly, with anguish, addressing herself to M. de Montbron:

"But is what you tell me true?"

"What I tell you!"

"Yes—that Prince Djalma ——"

"Loves you to madness? Alas! it is only too true."

"No, no," cried Adrienne, with a charming expression of simplicity; "that could never be *too* true."

"What do you say?" cried the count.

"But that woman?" asked Adrienne, as if the word scorched her lips.

"What woman?"

"She who has been the cause of all these painful struggles."

"That woman! — why, who should it be but you?"

"What, I? Oh! tell me, was it I?"

"On my word of honor I trust my experience. I have never seen so ardent and sincere a passion."

"Oh! is it really so? Has he never had any other love?"

"Never."

"Yet I was told so."

"By whom?"

"M. Rodin."

"That Djalma ——"

"Had fallen violently in love two days after I saw him."

"M. Rodin told you that!" cried M. de Montbron, as if struck with a sudden idea. "Why, it is he who told Djalma that you were in love with some one else."

"I!"

"And this it was which occasioned the poor youth's dreadful despair."

"It was this which occasioned *my* despair."

"You love him, then, just as he loves you!" exclaimed M. de Montbron, transported with joy.

"Love him!" said Mademoiselle de Cardoville.

A discreet knock at the door interrupted Adrienne.

"One of your servants, no doubt. Be calm," said the count.

"Come in," said Adrienne, in an agitated voice.

"What is it?" said Mademoiselle de Cardoville.

Florine entered the room.

"M. Rodin has just been. Fearing to disturb mademoiselle, he would not come in; but he will return in half an hour. Will mademoiselle receive him?"

"Yes, yes," said the count to Florine; "even if I am still here, show him in by all means. Is not that your opinion?" asked M. de Montbron of Adrienne.

"Quite so," answered the young girl; and a flash of indignation darted from her eyes as she thought of Rodin's perfidy.

"Oho! the old knave!" said M. de Montbron, "I always had my doubts of that crooked neck!"

Florine withdrew, leaving the count with her mistress.

CHAPTER IV

LOVE



MADEMOISELLE DE CARDOVILLE was transfigured. For the first time her beauty shone forth in all its luster. Until now overshadowed by indifference, or darkened by grief, she appeared suddenly illumined by a brilliant ray of sunshine. The slight irritation caused by Rodin's perfidy passed like an imperceptible shade from her brow. What cared she now for falsehood and perfidy? Had they not failed? And, for the future, what human power could interpose between her and Djalma, so sure of each other? Who would dare to cross the path of those two beings, resolute and strong with the irresistible power of youth, love, and liberty? Who would dare to follow them into that blazing sphere, whither they went, so beautiful and happy, to blend together in their inextinguishable love, protected by the proof-armor of their own happiness?

Hardly had Florine left the room when Adrienne approached M. de Montbron with a rapid step. She seemed to have become taller; and to watch her advancing, light, radiant, and triumphant, one might have fancied her a goddess walking upon the clouds.

"When shall I see him?" was her first word to M. de Montbron.

"Well — say to-morrow; he must be prepared for so much happiness; in so ardent a nature such sudden, unexpected joy might be terrible."

Adrienne remained pensive for a moment, and then said rapidly:

"To-morrow — yes — not before to-morrow. I have a superstition of the heart."

"What is it?"

"You shall know. *He loves me* — that word says all, contains all, comprehends all, is all — and yet I have a thousand questions to ask with regard to him; but I will ask none before to-morrow, because, by a mysterious fatality, to-morrow is with me a sacred anniversary. It will be an age till then; but, happily, I can wait. Look here!"

Beckoning M. de Montbron, she led him to the Indian Bacchus.

"How much it is like him!" said she to the count.

"Indeed," exclaimed the latter, "it is strange!"

"Strange?" returned Adrienne, with a smile of gentle pride; "strange, that a hero, a demi-god, an ideal of beauty should resemble Djalma?"

"How you love him!" said M. de Montbron, deeply touched and almost dazzled by the felicity which beamed from the countenance of Adrienne.

"I must have suffered a good deal, do you not think so?" said she, after a moment's silence.

"If I had not made up my mind to come here to-day, almost in despair, what would have happened?"

"I cannot tell; I should perhaps have died, for I am wounded mortally here." She pressed her hand to her heart. "But what might have been death to me will now be life."

"It was horrible," said the count, shuddering. "Such a passion, buried in your own breast, proud as you are ——"

"Yes, proud—but not self-conceited. When I learned his love for another, and that the impression which I fancied I had made on him at our first interview had been immediately effaced, I renounced all hope, without being able to renounce my love. Instead of shunning his image, I surrounded myself with all that could remind me of him. In default of happiness, there is a bitter pleasure in suffering through what we love."

"I can now understand your Indian library"

Instead of answering the count, Adrienne took from the stand one of the freshly cut volumes, and, bringing it to M. de Montbron, said to him, with a smile and a celestial expression of joy and happiness:

"I was wrong; I am vain. Just read this, aloud if you please. I tell you that I can wait for to-morrow."

Presenting the book to the count, she pointed out one passage with the tip of her charming finger. Then she sank down upon the couch, and, in an attitude of deep attention, with her body bent forward, her hands crossed upon the cushion, her chin resting upon her hands, her large eyes fixed with a sort of adoration on the Indian Bacchus that was just opposite to her, she appeared by this impassioned contemplation to prepare herself to listen to M. de Montbron.

The latter, much astonished, began to read, after again looking at Adrienne, who said to him, in her most coaxing voice:

"Very slowly, I beg of you."

M. de Montbron then read the following passage from the journal of a traveler in India:

“When I was at Bombay, in 1829, I constantly heard amongst the English there of a young hero, the son of — —”

The count having paused a second, by reason of the barbarous



spelling of the name of Djalma's father, Adrienne immediately said to him, in her soft voice:

“The son of Kadja-sing.”

“What a memory!” said the count, with a smile. And he resumed:

“A young hero, the son of Kadja-sing, king of Mundi. On his return from a distant and sanguinary expedition amongst the mountains against this Indian king, Colonel Drake was filled with enthusiasm for this son of Kadja-sing, known as Djalma. Hardly beyond the age of childhood, this young prince has, in the course of this implacable war, given proofs of such chivalrous intrepidity, and of so noble a character, that his father has been surnamed the *Father of the Generous*.”

“That is a touching custom,” said the count. “To recompense the father, as it were, by giving him a surname in honor of his son, is a great idea. But how strange you should have met with this book!” added the count, in surprise. “I can understand; there is matter here to inflame the coolest head.”

“Oh! you will see, you will see,” said Adrienne.

The count continued to read:

“Colonel Drake, one of the bravest and best officers of the English army said yesterday, in my presence, that, having been dangerously wounded, and taken prisoner by Prince Djalma, after an energetic resistance, he had been conveyed to the camp established in the village of ——”

Here there was the same hesitation on the part of the count, on seeing a still more barbarous name than the first; so, not wishing to try the adventure, he paused, and said to Adrienne:

“Now, really, I give this up.”

“And yet it is so easy!” replied Adrienne; and she pronounced with inexpressible softness a name in itself soft.

“The village of Shumshabad.”

“You appear to have an infallible process for remembering geographical names,” said the count, continuing:

“Once arrived at the camp, Colonel Drake received the kindest hospitality, and Prince Djalma treated him with the respect of a son. It was there that the colonel became acquainted with some facts, which carried to the highest pitch his enthusiasm for Prince Djalma. I heard him relate the two following:

““In one of the battles, the prince was accompanied by a young Indian of about twelve years of age, whom he loved tenderly, and who served him as a page, following him on horseback to carry his spare weapons. This child was idolized by its mother; just as they set out on the expedition, she had intrusted her son to Prince Djalma’s care, saying, with a stoicism worthy of antiquity, ‘Let him be your brother.’ ‘He shall be my brother,’ had replied the prince. In the height of a disastrous defeat, the child is severely wounded and his horse killed; the prince at peril of his life, notwithstanding the precipitation of a forced retreat, disengages him, and places him on the croup of his own horse; they are pursued; a musket-ball strikes their steed, who is just able to reach a jungle, in the midst of which, after some vain efforts, he falls exhausted. The child is unable to walk, but the prince carries him in his arms and hides with him in the thickest part of the jungle. The English arrive and begin their search; but the two victims escape. After a night and a day of marches, counter-marches, stratagems, fatigues, unheard-of perils, the prince, still carrying the child, one of whose legs is broken, arrives at his father’s camp, and says, with the utmost simplicity, ‘I had promised his mother that I would act a brother’s part by him — and I have done so.’”

"That is admirable!" cried the count.

"Go on—pray go on!" said Adrienne, drying a tear, without removing her eyes from the bas-relief, which she continued to contemplate with growing adoration.

The count continued:

" "Another time, Prince Djalma, followed by two black slaves, went, before sunrise, to a very wild spot, to seize a couple of tiger cubs only a few days old. The den had been previously discovered. The two old tigers were still abroad. One of the blacks entered the den by a narrow aperture; the other, aided by Djalma, cut down a tolerably large tree, to prepare a trap for one of the old tigers. On the side of the aperture the cavern was exceedingly steep. The prince mounted to the top of it with agility, to set his trap, with the aid of the other black. Suddenly a dreadful roar was heard; and, in a few bounds, the tigress, returning from the chase, reached the opening of the den. The black who was laying the trap with the prince had his skull fractured by her bite; the tree, falling across the entrance, prevented the female from penetrating the cavern, and at the same time stopped the exit of the black, who had seized the cubs.

" "About twenty feet higher, upon a ledge of rock, the prince lay flat on the ground, looking down upon this frightful spectacle. The tigress, rendered furious by the cries of her little ones, gnawed the hands of the black, who, from the interior of the den, strove to support the trunk of the tree, his only rampart, while he uttered the most lamentable outeries."

"It is horrible!" said the count.

"Oh! go on! pray go on!" exclaimed Adrienne, with excitement; "you will see what can be achieved by the heroism of goodness."

The count pursued:

" "Suddenly the prince seized his dagger between his teeth, fastened his sash to a block of stone, took his axe in one hand, and with the other slid down this substitute for a rope; falling a few steps from the wild beast, he sprang upon her, and, swift as lightning, dealt her two mortal strokes, just as the black, losing his strength, was about to drop the trunk of the tree, sure to have been torn to pieces."

"And you are astonished at his resemblance with the demi-god, to whom fable itself ascribes no more generous devotion!" cried the young lady, with still increasing excitement.

"I am astonished no longer; I only admire," said the count, in a voice of emotion; "and, at these two noble instances of heroism, my heart beats with enthusiasm, as if I were still twenty"

"And the noble heart of this traveler beat like yours at the recital," said Adrienne; "you will see."

" "What renders so admirable the intrepidity of the prince is that, according to the principle of Indian castes, the life of a slave is of no importance; thus a king's son, risking his life for the safety of a poor creature so generally despised, obeyed an heroic and truly Christian instinct of charity, until then unheard of in this country.

" "Two such actions," said Colonel Drake, with good reason, "are sufficient to paint the man." It is with a feeling of profound respect and admiration, therefore, that I, an obscure traveler, have written the name of Prince Djalma in my book; and at the same

time, I have experienced a kind of sorrow, when I have asked myself what would be the future fate of this prince, buried in the depths of a savage country, always devastated by war. However humble may be the homage that I pay to this character, worthy of the heroic age, his name will at least be repeated with generous enthusiasm by all those who have hearts that beat in sympathy with what is great and noble.' ”

“ And just now, when I read those simple and touching lines,” resumed Adrienne, “ I could not forbear pressing my lips to the name of the traveler.”

“ Yes; he is such as I thought him,” cried the count, with still more emotion, as he returned the book to Adrienne, who rose, with a grave and touching air, and said to him :

“ It was thus I wished you to know him, that you might understand my adoration; for this courage, this heroic goodness, I had guessed beforehand, when I was an involuntary listener to his conversation. From that moment I knew him to be generous as intrepid, tender and sensitive as energetic and resolute; and when I saw him so marvelously beautiful — so different, in the noble character of his countenance, and even in the style of his garments, from all I had hitherto met with — when I saw the impression that I made upon him, and which I perhaps felt still more violently, I knew that my whole life was bound up with his love.”

“ And now, what are your plans ? ”

“ Divine, radiant as my heart. When he learns his happiness, I wish that Djalma should feel dazzled as I do, so as to prevent my gazing on my sun; for I repeat, that until to-morrow will be a century to me. Yes, it is strange! I should have thought that after such a discovery, I should feel the want of being left alone, plunged in an ocean of delicious dreams. But no! from this time till to-morrow — I dread solitude; I feel a kind of feverish impatience — uneasy — ardent. Oh! where is the beneficent fairy that, touching me with her wand, will lull me into slumber till to-morrow ! ”

“ I will be that beneficent fairy,” said the count, smiling.

“ You ? ”

“ Yes, I.”

“ And how so ? ”

“ The power of my wand is this: I will relieve you from a portion of your thoughts by making them materially visible.”

“ Pray explain yourself.”

“ And my plan will have another advantage for you. Listen to me; you are so happy now that you can hear anything. Your odious aunt, and her equally odious friends, are spreading the report that your residence with Dr. Baleinier — ”

"Was rendered necessary by the derangement of my mind," said Adrienne, with a smile; "I expected that."

"It is stupid enough; but, as your resolution to live alone makes many envious of you, and many hostile, you must feel that there will be no want of persons ready to believe the most absurd calumny possible."

"I hope as much. To pass for mad in the eyes of fools is very flattering."

"Yes; but to prove to fools that they are fools, and that in the face of all Paris, is much more amusing. Now, people begin to talk of your absence; you have given up your daily rides; for some time my niece has appeared alone in our box at the Opera; you wish to kill the time till to-morrow — well! here is an excellent opportunity. It is two o'clock; at half-past three, my niece will come in the carriage; the weather is splendid; there is sure to be a crowd in the Bois de Boulogne. You can take a delightful ride, and be seen by everybody. Then, as the air and movement will have calmed your fever of happiness, I will commence my magic this evening, and take you to India."

"To India?"

"Into the midst of one of those wild forests, in which roar the lion, the panther, and the tiger. We will have this heroic combat, which so moved you just now, under our own eyes, in all its terrible reality."

"Really, my dear count, you must be joking."

"Not at all; I promise to show you real wild beasts, formidable tenants of the country of our demi-god — growling tigers — roaring lions; do you not think that will be better than books?"

"But how?"

"Come! I must give you the secret of my supernatural power. On returning from your ride, you shall dine with my niece, and we will go together to a very curious spectacle, now exhibiting at the Porte Saint-Martin Theater. A most extraordinary lion-tamer there shows you a number of wild beasts, in a state of nature, in the midst of a forest (here only commences the illusion), and has fierce combats with them all — tigers, lions, and panthers. All Paris is crowding to these representations, and all Paris will see you there, more charming than ever."

"I accept your offer," said Adrienne, with childish delight. "Yes, you are right. I shall feel a strange pleasure in beholding these ferocious monsters, who will remind me of those that my demi-god so heroically overcame. I accept also because, for the first time in my life, I am anxious to be admired — even by everybody. I accept finally because —"

Here Mademoiselle de Cardoville was interrupted by a low knock at the door, and by the entrance of Florine, who announced M. Rodin.

CHAPTER V

THE EXECUTION

RODIN entered. A rapid glance at Mademoiselle de Cardoville and M. de Montbron told him at once that he was in a dilemma. In fact, nothing could be less encouraging than the faces of Adrienne and the count.

The latter, when he disliked people, exhibited his antipathy, as we have already said, by an impertinently aggressive manner, which had before now occasioned a good number of duels. At sight of Rodin, his countenance at once assumed a harsh and insolent expression; resting his elbow on the chimney-piece and conversing with Adrienne, he looked disdainfully over his shoulder, without taking the least notice of the Jesuit's low bow

On the other hand, at sight of this man, Mademoiselle de Cardoville almost felt surprise that she should experience no movement of anger or hatred; the brilliant flame which burned in her heart purified it from every vindictive sentiment. She smiled, on the contrary; for, glancing with gentle pride at the Indian Bacchus, and then at herself, she asked herself what two beings, so young, and fair, and free, and loving, could have to fear from this old, sordid man, with his ignoble and base countenance, now advancing toward her with the writhing of a reptile. In a word, far from feeling anger or aversion with regard to Rodin, the young lady seemed full of the spirit of mocking gayety, and her large eyes, already lighted up with happiness, now sparkled with irony and mischief.

Rodin felt himself ill at ease. People of his stamp greatly prefer violent to mocking enemies. They can encounter bursts of rage—sometimes by falling on their knees, weeping, groaning, and beating their breasts; sometimes by turning on their adversary, armed and implacable. But they are easily disconcerted by biting raillery; and thus it was with Rodin. He saw that between Adrienne de Cardoville and M. de Montbron he was about to be placed in what is vulgarly termed a “regular fix.”

The count opened the fire; still glancing over his shoulder, he said to Rodin :

"Ah! you are here, my benevolent gentleman!"

"Pray, sir, draw a little nearer," said Adrienne, with a mocking smile. "Best of friends and model of philosophers, as well as declared enemy of all fraud and falsehood, I have to pay you a thousand compliments."

"I accept anything from you, my dear young lady, even though undeserved," said the Jesuit, trying to smile, and thus exposing his vile yellow teeth; "but may I be informed how I have earned these compliments?"

"Your penetration, sir, which is rare," replied Adrienne.

"And your veracity, sir," said the count, "which is perhaps no less rare ——"

"In what have I exhibited my penetration, my dear young lady?" said Rodin coldly. "In what my veracity?" added he, turning toward M. de Montbron.

"In what, sir?" said Adrienne. "Why, you have guessed a secret surrounded by difficulties and mystery. In a word, you have known how to read the depths of a woman's heart."

"I, my dear young lady?"

"You, sir! rejoice at it, for your penetration has had the most fortunate results."

"And your veracity has worked wonders," added the count.

"It is pleasant to do good, even without knowing it," said Rodin, still acting on the defensive, and throwing side-glances by turns on the count and Adrienne; "but will you inform me what it is that deserves this praise ——"

"Gratitude obliges me to inform you of it," said Adrienne maliciously; "you have discovered and told Prince Djalma that I was passionately in love. Well! I admire your penetration; it was true."

"You have also discovered and told this lady that Prince Djalma was passionately in love," resumed the count. "Well! I admire your penetration, my dear sir; it was true."

Rodin looked confused and at a loss for a reply

"The person that I loved so passionately," said Adrienne, "was the prince."

"The person that the prince loved so passionately," resumed the count, "was this lady"

These revelations, so sudden and alarming, almost stunned Rodin; he remained mute and terrified, thinking of the future.

"Do you understand now, sir, the extent of our gratitude toward

you?" resumed Adrienne, in a still more mocking tone. "Thanks to your sagacity, thanks to the touching interest you take in us, the prince and I are indebted to you for the knowledge of our mutual sentiments."

The Jesuit had now gradually recovered his presence of mind, and his apparent calmness greatly irritated M. de Montbron, who, but for Adrienne's presence, would have assumed another tone than jests.

"There is some mistake," said Rodin, "in what you have done me the honor to tell me, my dear young lady. I have never in my life spoken of the sentiments, however worthy and respectable, that you may entertain for Prince Djalma —"

"That is true," replied Adrienne; "with scrupulous and exquisite discretion, whenever you spoke to me of the deep love felt by Prince Djalma, you carried your reserve and delicacy so far as to inform me that it was not I whom he loved."

"And the same scruple induced you to tell the prince that Mademoiselle de Cardoville loved some one passionately — but that he was not the person," added the count.

"Sir," answered Rodin dryly, "I need hardly tell you that I have no desire to mix myself up with amorous intrigues."

"Come! this is either pride or modesty," said the count insolently "For your own interest, pray do not advance such things; for, if we took you at your word, and it became known, it might injure some of the nice little trades that you carry on."

"There is one at least," said Rodin, drawing himself up as proudly as M. de Montbron, "whose rude apprenticeship I shall owe to you. It is the wearisome one of listening to your discourse."

"I tell you what, my good sir!" replied the count disdainfully: "you force me to remind you that there are more ways than one of chastising impudent rogues."

"My dear count!" said Adrienne to M. de Montbron, with an air of reproach.

With perfect coolness Rodin replied:

"I do not exactly see, sir, first, what courage is shown by threatening a poor old man like myself; and, secondly —"

"M. Rodin," said the count, interrupting the Jesuit, "first, a poor old man like you, who does evil under the shelter of the age he dishonors, is both cowardly and wicked, and deserves a double chastisement; secondly, with regard to this question of age, I am not aware that gamekeepers and policemen bow down respectfully to the gray coats of old wolves and the gray hairs of old thieves. What do you think, my good sir?"

Still impassible, Rodin raised his flabby eyelid, fixed for hardly a

second his little reptile-eye upon the count, and darted at him one of his rapid, cold, and piercing glances — and then the livid eyelid again covered the dull eye of that corpse-like face.



“Not having the disadvantage of being an old wolf, and still less an old thief,” said Rodin quietly, “you will permit me, sir, to take no account of the pursuit of hunters and police. As for the reproaches

made me, I have a very simple method of answering — I do not say of justifying myself — I never justify myself ——”

“You don’t say!” said the count.

“Never,” resumed Rodin coolly; “my acts are sufficient for that. I will then simply answer, that seeing the deep, violent, almost fearful impression made by this lady on the prince ——”

“Let this assurance which you give me of the prince’s love,” said Adrienne, interrupting Rodin with an enchanting smile, “absolve you of all the evil you wished to do me; the sight of our happiness be your only punishment!”

“It may be that I need neither absolution nor punishment, for, as I have already had the honor to observe to the count, my dear young lady, the future will justify my acts. Yes; it was my duty to tell the prince that you loved another than himself, and to tell you that he loved another than yourself — all in your mutual interest. That my attachment for you may have misled me, is possible — I am not infallible; but, after my past conduct toward you, my dear young lady, I have, perhaps, some right to be astonished at seeing myself thus treated. This is not a complaint. If I never justify myself, I never complain either.”

“Now, really, there is something heroic in all this, my good sir,” said the count. “You do not condescend to complain or justify yourself, with regard to the evil you have done.”

“The evil I have done?” said Rodin, looking fixedly at the count. “Are we playing at enigmas?”

“What, sir!” cried the count, with indignation; “is it nothing, by your falsehoods, to have plunged the prince into so frightful a state of despair that he has twice attempted his life? Is it nothing, by similar falsehoods, to have induced this lady to believe so cruel and complete an error that, but for the resolution I have to-day taken, it might have led to the most fatal consequences?”

“And will you do me the honor to tell me, sir, what interest I could have in all this despair and error, admitting even that I had wished to produce them?”

“Some great interest, no doubt,” said the count bluntly; “the more dangerous that it is concealed. You are one of those, I see, to whom the woes of others are pleasure and profit.”

“That is really too much, sir,” said Rodin, bowing; “I should be quite contented with the profit.”

“Your impudent coolness will not deceive me; this is a serious matter,” said the count. “It is impossible that so perfidious a piece of roguery can be an isolated act. Who knows but this may still be one

of the fruits of Madame de Saint-Dizier's hatred for Mademoiselle de Cardoville?"

Adrienne had listened to the preceding discussion with deep attention. Suddenly she started, as if struck by a sudden revelation.

After a moment's silence, she said to Rodin, without anger, without bitterness, but with an expression of gentle and serene calmness:

"We are told, sir, that happy love works miracles. I should be tempted to believe it; for, after some minutes' reflection, and when I recall certain circumstances, your conduct appears to me in quite a new light."

"And what may this new perspective be, my dear young lady?"

"That you may see it from my point of view, sir, allow me to remind you of a few facts. That sewing-girl was generously devoted to me; she had given me unquestionable proofs of her attachment. Her mind was equal to her noble heart; but she had an invincible dislike to you. All on a sudden she disappears mysteriously from my house, and you do your best to cast upon her odious suspicions. M. de Montbron has a paternal affection for me; but, as I must confess, little sympathy for you; and you have always tried to produce a coldness between us. Finally, Prince Djalma has a deep affection for me, and you employ the most perfidious treachery to kill that sentiment within him. For what end do you act thus? I do not know; but certainly with some hostile design."

"It appears to me, mademoiselle," said Rodin severely, "that you have forgotten services performed."

"I do not deny, sir, that you took me from the house of Dr. Baleinier; but, a few days sooner or later, I must infallibly have been released by M. de Montbron."

"You are right, my dear child," said the count; "it may be that your enemies wished to claim the merit of what must necessarily have happened through the exertions of your friends."

"You are drowning, and I save you; it is all a mistake to feel grateful," said Rodin bitterly; "some one else would no doubt have saved you a little later."

"The comparison is wanting in exactness," said Adrienne, with a smile; "a lunatic asylum is not a river, and though, from what I see, I think you quite capable of diving, you have had no occasion to swim on this occasion. You merely opened a door for me which would have opened of itself a little later."

"Very good, my dear child!" said the count, laughing heartily at Adrienne's reply

"I know, sir, that your care did not extend to me only The daugh-

ters of Marshal Simon were brought back by you ; but we may imagine that the claim of the Duke de Ligny to the possession of his daughters would not have been in vain. You returned to an old soldier his imperial cross, which he held to be a sacred relic ; it is a very touching incident. Finally, you unmasked the Abbé d'Aigrigny and Dr. Baleinier ; but I had already made up my mind to unmask them. However, all this proves that you are a very clever man ——”

“Oh, mademoiselle !” said Rodin humbly

“Full of resources and invention ——”

“Oh, mademoiselle !”

“It is not my fault if, in our long interview at Dr. Baleinier's, you betrayed that superiority of mind which struck me so forcibly, and which seems to embarrass you so much at present. What would you have, sir ? Great minds like yours find it difficult to maintain their incognito. Yet, as by different ways—oh ! very different,” added the young lady maliciously, “we are tending to the same end,—still keeping in view our conversation at Dr. Baleinier's,—I wish, for the sake of our future communion, as you call it, to give you a piece of advice and speak frankly to you.”

Rodin had listened to Mademoiselle de Cardoville with apparent impassibility, holding his hat under his arm and twirling his thumbs, while his hands were crossed upon his waistcoat. The only external mark of the intense agitation into which he was thrown by the calm words of Adrienne was that the livid eyelids of the Jesuit, which had been hypocritically closed, became gradually red, as the blood flowed into them. Nevertheless, he answered Mademoiselle de Cardoville in a firm voice and with a low bow :

“Good advice and frankness are always excellent things.”

“You see, sir,” resumed Adrienne, with some excitement, “happy love bestows such penetration, such energy, such courage, as enables one to laugh at perils, to detect stratagems, and to defy hatred. Believe me, the divine light which surrounds two loving hearts will be sufficient to disperse all darkness and reveal every snare. You see, in India,—excuse my weakness, but I like to talk of India,” added the young girl, with a smile of indescribable grace and meaning,—“in India, when travelers sleep at night, they kindle great fires round their ajoupa,—excuse this touch of local coloring,—and far as extends the luminous circle, it puts to flight by its mere brilliancy all the impure and venomous reptiles that shun the day and live only in darkness.”

“The meaning of this comparison has quite escaped me,” said Rodin, continuing to twirl his thumbs, and half raising his eyelids, which were getting redder and redder.

"I will speak more plainly," said Adrienne, with a smile. "Suppose, sir, that the last is a service which you have rendered me and the prince,—for you only proceed by way of services,—that, I acknowledge, is novel and ingenious."

"Bravo, my dear child!" said the count joyfully. "The execution will be complete."

"Oh! this is meant for an execution?" said Rodin, still impassible.

"No, sir," answered Adrienne, with a smile; "it is a simple conversation between a poor young girl and an old philosopher, the friend of humanity. Suppose, then, that these frequent services that you have rendered to me and mine have suddenly opened my eyes; or, rather," added the young girl, in a serious tone, "suppose that Heaven, who gives to the mother the instinct to defend her child, has given me, along with happiness, the instinct to preserve my happiness, and that a vague presentiment, by throwing light on a thousand circumstances until now obscure, has suddenly revealed to me that, instead of being the friend, you are, perhaps, the most dangerous enemy of myself and family."

"So we pass from the execution to suppositions," said Rodin, still immovable.

"And from suppositions, sir, if you must have it, to certainty," resumed Adrienne, with dignified firmness; "yes, now I believe that I was for a while your dupe, and I tell you, without hate, without anger, but with regret, that it is painful to see a man of your sense and intelligence stoop to such machinations, and, after having recourse to so many diabolical maneuvers, finish at last by being ridiculous; for, believe me, there is nothing more ridiculous for a man like you than to be vanquished by a young girl, who has no weapon, no defense, no instructor, but her love. In a word, sir, I look upon you from to-day as an implacable and dangerous enemy; for I half perceive your aim, without guessing by what means you will seek to accomplish it. No doubt your future means will be worthy of the past. Well! in spite of all this, I do not fear you. From to-morrow, my family will be informed of everything, and an active, intelligent, resolute union will keep us all upon our guard, for it doubtless concerns this enormous inheritance, of which they wish to deprive us. Now, what connection can there be between the wrongs I reproach you with and the pecuniary end proposed? I do not at all know—but you have told me yourself that our enemies are so dangerously skillful, and their craft so far-reaching, that we must expect all, be prepared for all. I will remember the lesson. I have promised you frankness, sir, and now I suppose you have it."

"It would be an imprudent frankness if I were your enemy," said

Rodin, still impassible ; “but you also promised me some advice, my dear young lady.”

“My advice will be short ; do not attempt to continue the struggle, because, you see, there is something stronger than you and yours—it is a woman’s resolve, defending her happiness.”

Adrienne pronounced these last words with so sovereign a confidence, her beautiful countenance shone, as it were, with such intrepid joy, that Rodin, notwithstanding his phlegmatic audacity, was for a moment frightened. Yet he did not appear in the least disconcerted ; and, after a moment’s silence, he resumed, with an air of almost contemptuous compassion :

“My dear young lady, we may perhaps never meet again ; it is probable. Only remember one thing, which I now repeat to you : I never justify myself. The future will provide for that. Notwithstanding which, my dear young lady, I am your very humble servant.” And he made her a low bow

“Count, I beg to salute you most respectfully,” he added, bowing still more humbly to M. de Montbron. And he went out.

Hardly had Rodin left the room than Adrienne ran to her desk, and writing a few hasty lines, sealed the note, and said to M. de Montbron :

“I shall not see the prince before to-morrow—as much from superstition of the heart as because it is necessary for my plans that this interview should be attended with some little solemnity. You shall know all ; but I write to him on the instant, for, with an enemy like M. Rodin, one must be prepared for all.”

“You are right, my dear child ; quick ! the letter.”

Adrienne gave it to him.

“I tell him enough,” said she, “to calm his grief ; and not enough to deprive me of the delicious happiness of the surprise I reserve for to-morrow ”

“All this has as much sense as heart in it ; I will hasten to the prince’s abode to deliver your letter. I shall not see him, for I could not answer for myself. But come ! our proposed drive, our evening’s amusement, are still to hold good.”

“Certainly. I have more need than ever to divert my thoughts till to-morrow. I feel, too, that the fresh air will do me good, for this interview with M. Rodin has warmed me a little.”

“The old wretch ! but we will talk further of him. I will hasten to the prince’s and return with Madame de Morinval, to fetch you to the Champs-Élysées.”

The Count de Montbron withdrew precipitately, as joyful at his departure as he had been sad on his arrival.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHAMPS-ÉLYSÉES

IT was about two hours after the interview of Rodin with Mademoiselle de Cardoville. Numerous loungers, attracted to the Champs-Élysées by the serenity of a fine spring day (it was toward the end of the month of March), stopped to admire a very handsome equipage.

A bright-blue open carriage, with white and blue wheels, drawn by four superb horses, of cream color, with black manes, and harness glittering with silver ornaments, mounted by two boy postilions of equal size, with black velvet caps, light-blue cassimere jackets with white collars, buckskin breeches, and top-boots; two tall, powdered footmen, also in light-blue livery, with white collars and facings, being seated in the rumble behind. No equipage could have been turned out in better style. The horses, full of blood, spirit, and vigor, were skillfully managed by the postilions, and stepped with singular regularity, gracefully keeping time in their movements, champing their bits covered with foam, and ever and anon shaking their cockades of blue and white silk, with long floating ends, and a bright rose blooming in the midst. A man on horseback, dressed with elegant simplicity, keeping at the other side of the avenue, contemplated with proud satisfaction this equipage which he had, as it were, created. It was M. de Bonneville, Adrienne's equerry, as M. de Montbron called him; for the carriage belonged to that young lady.

A change had taken place in the plan for this magic day's amusement. M. de Montbron had not been able to deliver Mademoiselle de Cardoville's note to Prince Djalma. Faringhea had told him that the prince had gone that morning into the country with Marshal Simon, and would not be back before evening. The letter should be given him on his arrival.

Completely satisfied as to Djalma, knowing that he could find these few lines, which, without informing him of the happiness that awaited

him, would at least give him some idea of it, Adrienne had followed the advice of M. de Montbron, and gone to the drive in her own carriage, to show all the world that she had quite made up her mind, in spite of the perfidious reports circulated by the Princess de Saint-Dizier, to keep to her resolution of living by herself in her own way. Adrienne wore a small white bonnet, with a fall of blonde, which well became her rosy face and golden hair; her high dress of garnet-colored velvet was almost hidden beneath a large green cashmere shawl. The young Marchioness de Morinval, who was also very pretty and elegant, was seated at her right. M. de Montbron occupied the front seat of the carriage.

Those who know the Parisian world, or, rather, that imperceptible fraction of the world of Paris which goes every fine sunny day to the Champs-Élysées to see and be seen, will understand that the presence of Mademoiselle de Cardoville on that brilliant promenade was an extraordinary and interesting event.

The world, as it is called, could hardly believe its eyes on seeing this lady of eighteen, possessed of princely wealth and belonging to the highest nobility, thus prove to every one by this appearance in public that she was living completely free and independent, contrary to all custom and received notions of propriety. This kind of emancipation appeared something monstrous, and people were almost astonished that the graceful and dignified bearing of the young lady should belie so completely the calumnies circulated by Madame de Saint-Dizier and her friends with regard to the pretended madness of her niece.

Many beaux, profiting by their acquaintance with the Marchioness de Morinval or M. de Montbron, came by turns to pay their respects, and rode for a few minutes by the side of the carriage, so as to have an opportunity of seeing, admiring, and perhaps hearing, Mademoiselle de Cardoville; she surpassed their expectations, by talking with her usual grace and spirit. Then surprise and enthusiasm knew no bounds. What had at first been blamed as an almost insane caprice was now voted a charming originality, and it only depended on Mademoiselle de Cardoville herself to be declared from that day the queen of elegance and fashion.

The young lady understood very well the impression she had made; she felt proud and happy, for she thought of Djalma; when she compared him to all these men of fashion, her happiness was the more increased. And, verily, these young men, most of whom had never quitted Paris, or had ventured at most as far as Naples or Baden, looked insignificant enough by the side of Djalma, who, at his age, had so many times commanded and combated in bloody wars, and whose reputation for courage and generosity, mentioned by travelers with admiration,

had already reached from India to Paris. And then, how could these charming exquisites, with their small hats, their scanty frock-coats, and their huge cravats, compare with the Indian prince, whose graceful



and manly beauty was still heightened by the splendor of a costume at once so rich and so picturesque ?

On this happy day all was joy and love for Adrienne. The sun,

setting in a splendidly serene sky, flooded the promenade with its golden light. The air was warm. Carriages and horsemen passed and repassed in rapid succession ; a light breeze played with the scarfs of the women and the plumes in their bonnets ; all around were noise, movement, sunshine. Adrienne, leaning back in her carriage, amused herself with watching this busy scene, sparkling with Parisian luxury ; but, in the vortex of this brilliant chaos, she saw in thought the mild, melancholy countenance of Djalma—when suddenly something fell into her lap, and she started. It was a bunch of half-faded violets. At the same instant she heard a child's voice following the carriage, and saying :

“ For the love of Heaven, my good lady, one little sou ! ”

Adrienne turned her head, and saw a poor little girl, pale and wan, with mild, sorrowful features, scarcely covered with rags, holding out her hand, and raising her eyes in supplication. Though the striking contrast of extreme misery, side by side with extreme luxury, is so common that it no longer excites attention, Adrienne was deeply affected by it. She thought of Mother Bunch, now, perhaps, the victim of frightful destitution.

“ Ah ! at least,” thought the young lady, “ let not this day be one of happiness for me alone ! ”

She leaned from the carriage-window, and said to the poor child :

“ Have you a mother, my dear ? ”

“ No, my lady, I have neither father nor mother.”

“ Who takes care of you ? ”

“ No one, my lady They give me nosegays to sell, and I must bring home money — or they beat me.”

“ Poor little thing ! ”

“ A sou, my good lady — a sou, for the love of Heaven ! ” said the child, continuing to follow the carriage, which was then moving slowly.

“ My dear count,” said Adrienne, smiling, and addressing M. de Montbron, “ you are, unfortunately, no novice at an elopement. Please to stretch forth your arms, take up that child with both hands, and lift her into the carriage. We can hide her between Madame de Morinval and myself ; and we can drive away before any one perceives this audacious abduction.”

“ What ! ” said the count, in surprise. “ You wish — ”

“ Yes ; I beg you to do it.”

“ What a folly ! ”

“ Yesterday, you might, perhaps, have treated this caprice as a folly ; but to-day,” said Adrienne, laying great stress upon the word, and glancing at M. de Montbron with a significant air, “ to-day, you should understand that it is almost a duty ”

"Yes, I understand you, good and noble heart!" said the count, with emotion; while Madame de Morinval, who knew nothing of Mademoiselle de Cardoville's love for Djalma, looked with as much surprise as curiosity at the count and the young lady.

M. de Montbron, leaning from the carriage, stretched out his arms toward the child, and said to her:

"Give me your hands, little girl."

Though much astonished, the child obeyed mechanically, and held out both her little arms; then the count took her by the wrists, and lifted her lightly from the ground, which he did the more easily as the carriage was very low and its progress by no means rapid. More stupefied than frightened, the child said not a word. Adrienne and Madame de Morinval made room for her to crouch down between them, and the little girl was soon hidden beneath the shawls of the two young women. All this was executed so quickly that it was hardly perceived by a few persons passing in the side-avenues.

"Now, my dear count," said Adrienne, radiant with pleasure, "let us make off at once with our prey"

M. de Montbron half rose, and called to the postilions:

"Home!" And the four horses started at once into a rapid and regular trot.

"This day of happiness now seems consecrated, and my luxury is excused," thought Adrienne; "till I can again meet with that poor Mother Bunch, and from this day I will make every exertion to find her out, her place will at least not be quite empty."

There are often strange coincidences in life. At the moment when this thought of the hunchback crossed the mind of Adrienne, a crowd had collected in one of the side-avenues, and other persons soon ran to join the group.

"Look, uncle!" said Madame de Morinval; "how many people are assembled yonder. What can it be? Shall we stop and send to inquire?"

"I am sorry, my dear, but your curiosity cannot be satisfied," said the count, drawing out his watch; "it will soon be six o'clock, and the exhibition of the wild beasts begins at eight. We shall only just have time to go home and dine. Is not that your opinion, my dear child?" said he to Adrienne.

"And yours, Julia?" said Mademoiselle de Cardoville to the marchioness.

"Oh, certainly!" answered her friend.

"I am the less inclined to delay," resumed the count, "as when I have taken you to the Porte Saint-Martin, I shall be obliged to go for half an hour to my club, to ballot for Lord Campbell, whom I propose."

"Then, Adrienne and I will be left alone at the play, uncle?"

"Your husband will go with you, I suppose."

"True, dear uncle; but do not quite leave us, because of that."

"Be sure I shall not; for I am curious as you are to see these terrible animals and the famous Morok, the incomparable lion-tamer."

A few minutes after, Mademoiselle de Cardoville's carriage had left the Champs-Élysées, carrying with it the little girl, and directing its course toward the Rue d'Anjou. As the brilliant equipage disappeared from the scene, the crowd, of which we before have spoken, greatly increased about one of the large trees in the Champs-Élysées, and expressions of pity were heard here and there amongst the groups. A loungeur approached a young man on the skirts of the crowd and said to him:

"What is the matter, sir?"

"I hear it is a poor young girl, a hunchback, that has fallen from exhaustion."

"A hunchback! is that all? There will always be enough hunchbacks," said the loungeur, brutally with a coarse laugh.

"Hunchback or not, if she dies of hunger," answered the young man, scarcely able to restrain his indignation, "it will be no less sad; and there is really nothing to laugh at, sir."

"Die of hunger! pooh!" said the loungeur, shrugging his shoulders. "It is only lazy scoundrels that will not work who die of hunger. And it serves them right."

"I wager, sir, there is one death you will never die of," cried the young man, incensed at the cruel insolence of the loungeur.

"What do you mean?" answered the other haughtily.

"I mean, sir, that your heart is not likely to kill you."

"Sir!" cried the loungeur, in an angry tone.

"Well! what, sir?" replied the young man, looking full in his face.

"Nothing," said the loungeur, turning abruptly on his heel, and grumbling as he sauntered toward an orange-colored cabriolet, on which was emblazoned an enormous coat-of-arms, surmounted by a baron's crest. A servant in green livery, ridiculously laced with gold, was standing beside the horse, and did not perceive his master.

"Are you catching flies, fool?" said the latter, pushing him with his cane.

The servant turned round in confusion.

"Sir," said he.

"Will you never learn to call me Monsieur le Baron, rascal?" cried his master in a rage. "Open the door directly!"

The loungeur was Baron Tripeaud, the manufacturing baron, the

stockjobber. The poor hunchback was Mother Bunch, who had, indeed, fallen with hunger and fatigue while on her way to Mademoiselle de Cardoville's. The unfortunate creature had found courage to brave the shame of the ridicule she so much feared, by returning to that house from which she was a voluntary exile; but this time it was not for herself, but for her sister Cephyse — the Bacchanal Queen, who had returned to Paris the previous day, and whom Mother Bunch now sought, through the means of Adrienne, to rescue from a most dreadful fate.

.

Two hours after these different scenes, an enormous crowd pressed round the doors of the Porte Saint-Martin to witness the exercises of Morok, who was about to perform a mock combat with the famous black panther of Java, named *Death*.

Adrienne, accompanied by M. and Madame de Morinval, now stepped from a carriage at the entrance of the theater. They were to be joined in the course of the evening by M. de Montbron, whom they had dropped, in passing, at his club.

CHAPTER VII

BEHIND THE SCENES

THE large theater of the Porte Saint-Martin was crowded by an impatient multitude. All Paris had hurried with eager and burning curiosity to Morok's exhibition. It is quite unnecessary to say that the lion-tamer had completely abandoned his small trade in religious baubles which he had so successfully carried on at the White Falcon Inn at Leipsic. There were, moreover, numerous tokens by which the surprising effects of Morok's sudden conversion had been blazoned in the most extraordinary pictures; the antiquated baubles in which he had formerly dealt would have found no sale in Paris. Morok had nearly finished dressing himself in one of the actor's rooms, which had been lent to him. Over a coat of mail, with cuishes and brassarts, he wore an ample pair of red trousers, fastened round his ankles by broad rings of gilt brass. His long caftan of black cloth, embroidered with scarlet and gold, was bound round his waist and wrist by other large rings of gilt metal. This somber costume imparted to him an aspect still more ferocious. His thick and red-haired beard fell in large quantities down to his chest, and a long piece of white muslin was folded round his red head. A devout missionary in Germany and an actor in Paris, Morok knew as well as his employers, the Jesuits, how to accommodate himself to circumstances.

Seated in one corner of the room, and contemplating with a sort of stupid admiration, was Jacques Rennepont, better known as "Sleepin-buff" (from the likelihood that he would end his days in rags, or his present antipathy to great care in dress). Since the day Hardy's factory had been destroyed by fire, Jacques had not quitted Morok, passing the nights in excesses which had no baneful effects on the iron constitution of the lion-tamer. On the other's features, on the contrary, a great alteration was perceptible; his hollow cheeks, marble pallor, his eyes, by turns dull and heavy, or gleaming with lurid fire, betrayed the ravages of debauchery; his parched lips were almost con-

stantly curled by a bitter and sardonic smile. His spirit, once gay and sanguine, still struggled against the besotting influence of habitual intoxication. Unfitted for labor, no longer able to forego gross pleasures, Jacques sought to drown in wine the few virtuous impulses which he still possessed, and had sunk so low as to accept without shame the large dole of sensual gratification proffered him by Morok, who paid all the expenses of their orgies, but never gave him money, in order that he might be completely dependent on him. After gazing at Morok for some time in amazement, Jacques said to him, in a familiar tone :

"Well, yours is a famous trade ; you may boast that, at this moment, there are not two men like you in the whole world. That's flattering. It's a pity you don't stick to this fine trade."

"What do you mean ?"

"Why, how is the conspiracy going on, in whose honor you make me keep it up all day and all night ?"

"It is working, but the time is not yet come ; that is why I wish to have you always at hand, till the great day Do you complain ?"

"Hang it, no !" said Jacques. "What could I do ? Burnt up with brandy as I am, if I wanted to work, I've no longer the strength to do so. I have not, like you, a head of marble and a body of iron ; but as for fuddling myself with gunpowder, instead of anything else, that'll do for me ; I'm only fit for that work, now—and then, it will drive away thought."

"Of what kind ?"

"You know that when I do think, I think only of one thing," said Jacques gloomily.

"The Bacchanal Queen ?—still ?" said Morok, in a disdainful tone.

"Still ? rather ! when I shall think of her no longer, I shall be dead—or stupefied. Fiend !"

"You were never better or more intelligent, you fool !" replied Morok, fastening his turban.

The conversation was here interrupted. Morok's aide entered hastily.

The gigantic form of this Hercules had increased in width. He was habited like Alcides ; his enormous limbs, furrowed with veins as thick as whipcord, were covered with a close-fitting flesh-colored garment, to which a pair of red drawers formed a strong contrast.

"Why do you rush in like a storm, Goliath ?" said Morok.

"There's a pretty storm in the house ; they are beginning to get impatient, and are calling out like madmen. But if that were all."

"Well, what else ?"

"*Death* will not be able to play this evening."

Morok turned quickly round. He seemed uneasy.

"Why so?" he exclaimed.

"I have just seen her; she's crouching at the bottom of her cage; her ears lie so close to her head, she looks as if they had been cut off. You know what that means."

"Is that all?" said Morok, turning to the glass to complete his head-dress.

"It's quite enough; she's in one of her tearing fits. Since that night in Germany when she ripped up that old hack of a white horse, I've not seen her look so savage! her eyes shine like burning candles."

"Then she must have her fine collar on," said Morok quietly

"Her fine collar?"

"Yes; her spring-collar."

"And I must be lady's-maid," said the giant. "A nice toilet to attend to!"

"Hold your tongue!"

"That's not all," continued Goliath, hesitating.

"What more?"

"I might as well tell you at once."

"Will you speak?"

"Well! — he is here."

"Who, you stupid brute?"

"The Englishman!"

Morok started; his arms fell powerless by his side.

Jacques was struck with the lion-tamer's paleness and troubled countenance.

"The Englishman! — you have seen him?" cried Morok, addressing Goliath. "You are quite sure?"

"Quite sure. I was looking through the peephole in the curtain; I saw him in one of the stage-boxes — he wishes to see things close; he's easy to recognize, with his pointed forehead, big nose, and goggle eyes."

Morok shuddered again; usually fierce and unmoved, he appeared to be more and more agitated, and so alarmed that Jacques said to him:

"Who is this Englishman?"

"He has followed me from Strasburg, where he fell in with me," said Morok, with visible dejection. "He traveled with his own horses, by short stages, as I did; stopping where I stopped, so as never to miss one of my exhibitions. But two days before I arrived at Paris he left me — I thought I was rid of him," said Morok, with a sigh.

"Rid of him! — how you talk!" replied Jacques, surprised; "such a good customer, such an admirer!"



"Aye!" said Morok, becoming more and more agitated; "this wretch has wagered an enormous sum that I will be devoured in his presence, during one of my performances; he hopes to win his wager — that is why he follows me about."

Sleepinbuff found the John Bull idea so amusingly eccentric that, for the first time since a very long period, he burst into a peal of hearty laughter.

Morok, pale with rage, rushed toward him with so menacing an air that Goliath was obliged to interpose.

"Come, come," said Jacques, "don't be angry; if it is serious, I will not laugh any more."

Morok was appeased, and said to Sleepinbuff in a hoarse voice:

"Do you think me a coward?"

"No, by Heaven!"

"Well! and yet this Englishman, with his grotesque face, frightens me more than my tiger or my panther!"

"You say so, and I believe it," replied Jacques; "but I cannot understand why the presence of this man should alarm you."

"But, consider, you dull knave!" cried Morok, "that, obliged to watch incessantly the least movement of the ferocious beast, whom I keep in subjection by my action and my looks, there is something terrible in knowing that two eyes are there — always there — fixed — waiting till the least absence of mind shall expose me to be torn in pieces by the animals."

"Now I understand," said Jacques, shuddering in his turn. "It is terrible."

"Yes; for once there, though I may not see this cursed Englishman I fancy I have his two round eyes, fixed and wide open, always before me. My tiger, *Cain*, once nearly mutilated my arm, when my attention was drawn away by this Englishman, whom the devil take! Blood and thunder!" cried Morok; "this man will be fatal to me."

And Morok paced the room in great agitation.

"Besides, *Death* lays her ears close to her skull," said Goliath brutally. "If you persist — mind, I tell you — the Englishman will win his wager this evening."

"Go away, you brute! — don't vex my head with your confounded predictions," cried Morok; "go and prepare *Death's* collar."

"Well, every one to his taste; you wish the panther to *taste* you," said the giant, stalking heavily away after this joke.

"But if you feel these fears," said Jacques, "why do you not say that the panther is ill?"

Morok shrugged his shoulders, and replied with a sort of feverish ferocity:

“Have you ever heard of the fierce pleasure of the gamester who stakes his honor, his life, upon a card? Well! I too—in these daily exhibitions where my life is at stake—find a wild, fierce pleasure in braving death before a crowded assembly, shuddering and terrified at my audacity. Yes, even in the fear with which this Englishman inspired me, I find, in spite of myself, a terrible excitement, which I abhor, and which yet subjugates me.”

At this moment the stage-manager entered the room and interrupted the beast-tamer.

“May we give the signal, M. Morok?” said the stage-manager. “The overture will not last above ten minutes.”

“I am ready,” said Morok.

“The police-inspector has just now given orders that the double chain of the panther, and the iron ring riveted to the floor of the stage, at the end of the cavern in the foreground, shall be again examined; and everything has been reported quite secure.”

“Yes—secure—except for me,” murmured the beast-tamer.

“So, M. Morok, the signal may be given?”

“The signal may be given,” replied Morok.

And the manager went out.

CHAPTER VIII

UP WITH THE CURTAIN

THE usual bell sounded with solemnity behind the scenes; the overture began, and, to say the truth, but little attention was paid to it.

The interior of the theater offered a very animated view. With the exception of two stage-boxes even with the dress-circle, one to the left, the other to the right of the audience, every seat was occupied. A great number of very fashionable ladies, attracted, as is always the case, by the strange wildness of the spectacle, filled the boxes. The stalls were crowded by most of the young men who, in the morning, had walked their horses on the Champs-Élysées. The observations which passed from one stall to another will give some idea of their conversation.

“Do you know, my dear boy, there would not be so crowded or fashionable an audience to witness Racine’s *Athalie*?”

“Undoubtedly. What is the beggarly howling of an actor, compared to the roaring of the lion?”

“I cannot understand how the authorities permit this Morok to fasten his panther with a chain to an iron ring in the corner of the stage. If the chain were to break?”

“Talking of broken chains, there’s little Madame de Blinville, who is no tigress. Do you see her in the second tier, opposite?”

“It becomes her very well to have broken, as you say, the marriage chain; she looks very well this season.”

“Oh! there is the beautiful Duchess de Saint-Prix; all the world is here to-night — I don’t speak of ourselves.”

“It is a regular Opera-night. What a festive scene!”

“Well, after all, people do well to amuse themselves; perhaps it will not be for long.”

“Why so?”

“Suppose the cholera were to come to Paris?”

"Oh! nonsense!"

"Do *you* believe in the cholera?"

"To be sure I do! He's coming from the North, with his walking-stick under his arm."

"The devil take him on the road! don't let us see his green visage here."

"They say he's at London."

"A pleasant journey to him!"

"Come, let us talk of something else; it may be a weakness, if you please, but I call this a dull subject."

"I believe you."

"Oh! gentlemen — I am not mistaken — no — it is she!"

"Who then!"

"Mademoiselle de Cardoville! She is coming into the stage-box with Morinval and his wife. It is a complete resuscitation: this morning on the Champs-Élysées; in the evening here."

"Faith, you are right! It is Mademoiselle de Cardoville."

"Good Heaven! how lovely she is!"

"Lend me your eye-glass."

"Well, what do you think of her?"

"Exquisite — dazzling!"

"And, in addition to her beauty, an inexhaustible flow of wit, three hundred thousand francs a year, high birth, eighteen years of age, and free as air."

"Yes, that is to say that, provided it pleased her, I might be to-morrow — or even to-day — the happiest of men."

"It is enough to turn one's brain."

"I am told that her mansion, Rue d'Anjou, is like an enchanted palace. A great deal is said about a bath-room and bedroom, worthy of the Arabian Nights."

"And free as air — I come back to that."

"Ah! if I were in her place!"

"My levity would be quite shocking."

"Oh! gentlemen, what a happy man will he be who is loved first!"

"You think, then, that she will have many lovers?"

"Being as free as air —"

"All the boxes are full, except the stage-box opposite to that in which Mademoiselle de Cardoville is seated. Happy the occupiers of that box!"

"Did you see the English ambassador's lady in the dress-circle?"

"And the Princess d'Alvimar — what an enormous bouquet!"

"I should like to know the name — of that nosegay."

"Oh ! it's Germigny "

"How flattering for the lions and tigers, to attract so fashionable an audience."

"Do you notice, gentlemen, how all the women are eye-glassing Mademoiselle de Cardoville !"

"She makes a sensation."

"She is right to show herself ; they gave her out as mad."

"Oh ! gentlemen, what a capital phiz !"

"Where — where ?"

"There — in the omnibus-box beneath Mademoiselle de Cardoville's."

"It's a Nuremburg nut-cracker"

"An orang-outang !"

"Did you ever see such round, staring eyes ?"

"And the nose !"

"And the forehead !"

"It's a caricature."

"Order, order ! the curtain rises."

And, in fact, the curtain rose.

Some explanation is necessary for the clear understanding of what follows. In the lower stage-box, to the left of the audience, were several persons, who had been referred to by the young men in the stalls. The omnibus-box was occupied by the Englishman, the eccentric and portentous better, whose presence inspired Morok with so much dread. It would require Hoffman's rare and fantastic genius to describe worthily that countenance, at once grotesque and frightful, as it stood out from the dark background of the box. This Englishman was about fifty years old ; his forehead was quite bald and of a conical shape ; beneath this forehead, surmounted by eyebrows like parenthesis marks, glittered large, green eyes, remarkably round and staring, and set very close to a hooked nose, extremely sharp and prominent ; a chin like that on the old-fashioned nut-crackers was half hidden in a broad and ample white cravat, as stiffly starched as the round-cornered shirt-collar, which nearly touched his ears. The face was exceedingly thin and bony, and yet the complexion was high-colored, approaching to purple, which made the bright green of the pupils and the white of the other part of the eyes still more conspicuous. The mouth, which was very wide, sometimes whistled inaudibly the tune of a Scotch jig (always the same tune), sometimes was slightly curled with a sardonic smile. The Englishman was dressed with extreme care ; his blue coat, with brass buttons, displayed his spotless waistcoat, snowy white as his ample cravat ; his shirt was fastened with two magnificent ruby studs, and his patrician hands were carefully kid-gloved. To any one who knew the

eccentric and cruel desire which attracted this man to every representation, his grotesque face became almost terrific, instead of exciting ridicule; and it was easy to understand the dread experienced by Morok at sight of those great, staring round eyes, which appeared to watch for the death of the lion-tamer (what a horrible death!) with unshaken confidence.

Above the dark box of the Englishman, affording a graceful contrast, were seated the Morinvals and Mademoiselle de Cardoville. The latter was placed nearest the stage. Her head was uncovered, and she wore a dress of sky-blue China crape, ornamented at the bosom with a brooch of the finest oriental pearls—nothing more; yet Adrienne, thus attired, was charming. She held in her hand an enormous bouquet composed of the rarest flowers of India; the stephanotis and the gardenia mingled the dead white of their blossoms with the purple hibiscus and Java amaryllis. Madame de Morinval, seated on the opposite side of the box, was dressed with equal taste and simplicity; Morinval, a fair and very handsome young man, of elegant appearance, was behind the two ladies. M. de Montbron was expected to arrive every moment.

The reader will please to recollect that the stage-box to the right of the audience, opposite Adrienne's, had remained till then quite empty.

The stage represented one of the gigantic forests of India. In the background, tall exotic trees rose in spiral or spreading forms, among rugged masses of perpendicular rocks, with here and there glimpses of a tropical sky. The side-scenes formed tufts of trees, interspersed with rocks; and at the side which was immediately beneath Adrienne's box appeared the irregular opening of a deep and gloomy cavern, round which were heaped huge blocks of granite, as if thrown together by some convulsion of nature. This scenery, full of a wild and savage grandeur, was wonderfully "built up," so as to make the illusion as complete as possible; the foot-lights were lowered, and, being covered with a purple shade, threw over this landscape a subdued reddish light, which increased the gloomy and startling effect of the whole.

Adrienne, leaning forward from the box, with cheeks slightly flushed, sparkling eyes, and throbbing heart, sought to trace in this scene the solitary forest described by the traveler who had eulogized Djalma's generosity and courage when he threw himself upon a ferocious tigress to save the life of a poor black slave. Chance coincided wonderfully indeed with her recollections. Absorbed in the contemplation of the scenery and the thoughts it awakened in her heart, she paid no attention to what was passing in the house. And yet something calculated to excite curiosity was taking place in the opposite stage-box.

The door of this box opened. A man about forty years of age, of a yellow complexion, entered; he was clothed after the East Indian fashion, in a long robe of orange silk, bound round the waist with a green sash, and he wore a small white turban. He placed two chairs at



the front of the box; and, having glanced round the house for a moment, he started, his black eyes sparkled, and he went out quickly. That man was Faringhea.

His apparition caused surprise and curiosity in the theater, the majority of the spectators not having, like Adrienne, a thousand reasons for being absorbed in the contemplation of a picturesque set scene. The public attention was still more excited when they saw the box which Faringhea had just left entered by a youth of rare beauty, also dressed oriental fashion, in a long robe of white cashmere with flowing sleeves, with a scarlet turban striped with gold on his head, and a sash to correspond, in which was stuck a long dagger glittering with precious stones. This young man was Prince Djalma.

For an instant he remained standing at the door, and cast a look of indifference upon the immense theater crowded with people; then, stepping forward with a majestic and tranquil air, the prince seated himself negligently on one of the chairs, and, turning his head in a few moments toward the entrance, appeared surprised at not seeing some person whom he doubtless expected.

This person appeared at length; the box-keeper had been assisting her to take off her cloak. She was a charming, fair-haired girl, attired, with more show than taste, in a dress of white silk with broad cherry-colored stripes, made ultra-fashionably low, and with short sleeves; a large bow of cherry-colored ribbon was placed on each side of her light hair, and set off the prettiest, sprightliest, most willful little face in the world.

It was Rose-Pompon. Her pretty arms were partly covered by long white gloves and ridiculously loaded with bracelets; in her hand she carried an enormous bouquet of roses. Far from imitating the calm demeanor of Djalma, Rose-Pompon skipped into the box, moved the chairs about noisily, and fidgeted on her seat for some time, to display her fine dress; then, without being in the least intimidated by the presence of the brilliant assembly, she, with a little coquettish air, held her bouquet toward Djalma, that he might smell it, and appeared finally to establish herself on her seat.

Faringhea came in, shut the door of the box, and seated himself behind the prince.

Adrienne, still completely absorbed in the contemplation of the Indian forest and in her own sweet thoughts, had not observed the new-comers. As she was turning her head completely toward the stage, and Djalma could not, for the moment, see even her profile, he, on his side, had not recognized Mademoiselle de Cardoville.

CHAPTER IX

"DEATH"

THE pantomime opening, by which was introduced the combat of Morok with the black panther, was so unmeaning that the majority of the audience paid no attention to it, reserving all their interest for the scene in which the lion-tamer was to make his appearance. This indifference of the public explains the curiosity excited in the theater by the arrival of Faringhea and Djalma—a curiosity which expressed itself (as at this day, when uncommon foreigners appear in public) by a slight murmur and general movement amongst the crowd.

The sprightly, pretty face of Rose-Pompon, always charming, in spite of her singularly staring dress, in style so ridiculous for such a theater, and her light and familiar manner toward the handsome Indian who accompanied her, increased and animated the general surprise; for, at this moment, Rose-Pompon, yielding without reserve to a movement of teasing coquetry, had held up, as we have already stated, her large bunch of roses to Djalma. But the prince, at sight of the landscape, which reminded him of his country, instead of appearing sensible to this pretty provocation, remained for some minutes as in a dream, with his eyes fixed upon the stage. Then Rose-Pompon began to beat time on the front of the box with her bouquet, while the somewhat too visible movement of her pretty shoulders showed that this devoted dancer was thinking of fast-life dances as the orchestra struck up a more lively strain.

Placed directly opposite the box in which Faringhea, Djalma, and Rose-Pompon had just taken their seats, Madame Morinval soon perceived the arrival of these two personages, and particularly the eccentric coquetties of Rose-Pompon. Immediately, the young marchioness, leaning over toward Mademoiselle de Cardoville, who was still absorbed in memories ineffable, said to her, laughing:

"My dear, the most amusing part of the performance is not upon the stage. Look just opposite."

"Just opposite?" repeated Adrienne mechanically; and turning toward Madame Morinval with an air of surprise, she glanced in the direction pointed out.

She looked—what did she see?—Djalma seated by the side of a young woman, who was familiarly offering to his sense of smell the perfume of her bouquet. Amazed, struck almost literally to the heart as by an electric shock, swift, sharp, and painful, Adrienne became deadly pale. From instinct she shut her eyes for a second in order *not to see*—as men try to ward off the dagger which, having once dealt the blow, threatens to strike again. Then suddenly to this feeling of grief succeeded a reflection, terrible both to her love and to her wounded pride.

"Djalma is present with this woman, though he must have received my letter," she said to herself,—“wherein he was informed of the happiness that awaited him.”

At the idea of so cruel an insult, a blush of shame and indignation displaced Adrienne's paleness, who, overwhelmed by this sad reality, said to herself:

“Rodin did not deceive me.”

We abandon all idea of picturing the lightning-like rapidity of certain emotions which in a moment may torture—may kill you in the space of a minute. Thus Adrienne was precipitated from the most radiant happiness to the lowest depths of an abyss of the most heart-rending grief in less than a second, for a second had hardly elapsed before she replied to Madame Morinval:

“What is there, then, so curious opposite to us, my dear Julia?”

This evasive question gave Adrienne time to recover her self-possession. Fortunately, thanks to the thick folds of hair, which almost entirely concealed her cheeks, the rapid and sudden changes from pallor to blush escaped the notice of Madame Morinval, who gayly replied:

“What, my dear, do you not perceive those East Indians who have just entered the box immediately opposite to ours? There, just before us!”

“Yes, I see them; but what then?” replied Adrienne in a firm tone.

“And don't you observe anything remarkable?” said the marchioness.

“Don't be too hard, ladies,” laughingly interposed the marquis; “we ought to allow the poor foreigners some little indulgence. They are ignorant of our manners and customs; were it not for that, they would never appear in the face of all Paris in such dubious company.”

“Indeed,” said Adrienne, with a bitter smile, “their simplicity is touching; we must pity them.”

“And, unfortunately, the girl is charming, spite of her low dress and

bare arms," said the marchioness; "she cannot be more than sixteen or seventeen at most. Look at her, my dear Adrienne; what a pity!"

"It is one of your charitable days, my dear Julia," answered Adrienne; "we are to pity the Indians, to pity this creature, and—pray, whom else are we to pity?"

"We will not pity that handsome Indian, in his red-and-gold turban," said the marquis, laughing, "for, if this goes on, the girl with the cherry-colored ribbons will be giving him a kiss. See how she leans toward her sultan!"

"They are very amusing," said the marchioness, sharing the hilarity of her husband, and looking at Rose-Pompon through her glass; then she resumed in about a minute, addressing herself to Adrienne: "I am quite certain of one thing. Notwithstanding her giddy airs, that girl is very fond of her Indian. I just saw a look that expresses a great deal."

"Why so much penetration, my dear Julia?" said Adrienne mildly; "what interest have we to read the heart of that girl?"

"Why, if she loves her sultan, she is quite in the right," said the marquis, looking through his opera-glass in turn; "for in my whole life I never saw a more handsome fellow than that Indian. I can only catch his side-face, but the profile is pure and fine as an antique cameo. Do you not think so?" added the marquis, leaning toward Adrienne. "Of course, it is only as a matter of art that I permit myself to ask you the question."

"As a work of *art*," answered Adrienne, "it is certainly very fine."

"But see!" said the marchioness; "how impertinent the little creature is! She is actually staring at us."

"Well!" said the marquis; "and she is actually laying her hand quite unceremoniously on her sultan's shoulder, to make him share, no doubt, in her admiration of you ladies."

In fact, Djalma, until now occupied with the contemplation of the scene which reminded him of his country, had remained insensible to the enticements of Rose-Pompon, and had not yet perceived Adrienne.

"Well, now!" said Rose-Pompon, bustling herself about in front of the box, and continuing to stare at Mademoiselle de Cardoville, for it was she, and not the marchioness, who now drew her attention; "that is something quite out of the common way—a pretty woman with red hair; but such a sweet red, it must be owned. Look, Prince Charming!"

And so saying, she tapped Djalma lightly on the shoulder; he started at these words, turned round, and for the first time perceived Mademoiselle de Cardoville.

Though he had been almost prepared for this meeting, the prince was so violently affected by it that he was about involuntarily to rise, in a state of the utmost confusion; but he felt the iron hand of Faringhea laid heavily on his shoulder, and heard him whisper in Hindostanee:

“Courage! and by to-morrow she will be at your feet.”

As Djalma still struggled to rise, the half-caste added, to restrain him:

“Just now, she grew pale and red with jealousy. No weakness, or all is lost!”

“So! there you are again, talking your dreadful gibberish,” said Rose-Pompon, turning round toward Faringhea. “First of all it is not polite; and then the language is so odd that one might suppose you were cracking nuts.”

“I spoke of you to my master,” said the half-caste; “he is preparing a surprise for you.”

“A surprise? Oh! that is different. Only make haste—do you hear, Prince Charming!” added she, looking tenderly at Djalma.

“My heart is breaking,” said Djalma, in a hollow voice to Faringhea, still using the language of India.

“But to-morrow it will bound with joy and love,” answered the half-caste. “It is only by disdain that you can conquer a proud woman. To-morrow, I tell you, she will be trembling, confused, supplicating, at your feet!”

“To-morrow she will hate me like death!” replied the prince mournfully.

“Yes, were she now to see you weak and cowardly. It is now too late to draw back; look full at her, take the nosegay from this girl, and raise it to your lips. Instantly, you will see yonder woman, proud as she is, grow pale and red, as just now. Then will you believe me?”

Reduced by despair to make almost any attempt, and fascinated in spite of himself by the diabolical hints of Faringhea, Djalma looked for a second full at Mademoiselle de Cardoville; then, with a trembling hand, he took the bouquet from Rose-Pompon, and, again looking at Adrienne, pressed it to his lips.

Upon this insolent bravado, Mademoiselle de Cardoville could not restrain so sudden and visible a pang that the prince was struck by it.

“She is yours,” said the half-caste to him. “Did you see, my lord, how she trembled with jealousy? Only have courage! and she is yours. She will soon prefer you to that handsome young man behind her—for *it is he* whom she has hitherto fancied herself in love with.”

As if the half-caste had guessed the movement of rage and hatred which this revelation would excite in the heart of the prince, he hastily added:

"Calmness and disdain! Is it not his turn now to hate you?"

The prince restrained himself, and drew his hand across his forehead, which glowed with anger.

"There, now! what are you telling him that vexes him so?" said Rose-Pompon to Faringhea, with pouting lip. Then, addressing Djalma, she continued:

"Come, Prince Charming, as they say in the fairy-tale, give me back my flowers."

As she took it again, she added:

"You have kissed it, and I could almost eat it."

Then, with a sigh, and a passionate glance at Djalma, she said softly to herself:

"That monster, Nini Moulin, did not deceive me. All this is *quite proper*; I have not even *that* to reproach myself with."

And with her little white teeth she bit at a rosy nail of her right hand, from which she had just drawn the glove.

It is hardly necessary to say that Adrienne's letter had not been delivered to the prince, and that he had not gone to pass the day in the country with Marshal Simon. During the three days in which Montbron had not seen Djalma, Faringhea had persuaded him that by affecting another passion he would bring Mademoiselle de Cardoville to terms. With regard to Djalma's presence at the theater, Rodin had learned from her maid, Florine, that her mistress was to go in the evening to the Porte Saint-Martin.

Before Djalma had recognized her, Adrienne, who felt her strength failing her, was on the point of quitting the theater; the man whom she had hitherto placed so high, whom she had regarded as a hero and a demi-god, and whom she had imagined plunged in such dreadful despair that, led by the most tender pity, she had written to him, with simple frankness, that a sweet hope might calm his grief, replied to a generous mark of sincerity and love by making himself a ridiculous spectacle with a creature unworthy of him. What incurable wounds for Adrienne's pride! It mattered little whether Djalma knew or not that she would be a spectator of the indignity. But when she saw herself recognized by the prince, when he carried the insult so far as to look full at her, and at the same time raise to his lips the creature's bouquet who accompanied him, Adrienne was seized with noble indignation, and felt sufficient courage to remain; instead of closing her eyes to evidence, she found a sort of barbarous pleasure in assisting at the agony and death of her pure and divine love. With head erect, proud and flashing eye, flushed cheek, and curling lip, she looked in her turn at the prince with disdainful steadiness. It was with a sardonic smile that she said to

the marchioness, who, like many others of the spectators, was occupied with what was passing in the stage-box :

"This revolting exhibition of savage manners is at least in accordance with the rest of the performance."

"Certainly," said the marchioness; "and my dear uncle will have lost, perhaps, the most amusing part."

"Montbron?" said Adrienne hastily, with hardly repressed bitterness; "yes, he will regret not having *seen all*. I am impatient for his arrival. Is it not to him that I am indebted for this charming evening?"

Perhaps Madame de Morinval would have remarked the expression of bitter irony, that Adrienne could not altogether dissemble, if suddenly a hoarse and prolonged roar had not attracted her attention, as well as that of the rest of the audience, who had hitherto been quite indifferent to the scenes intended for an introduction to the appearance of Morok. Every eye was now turned instinctively toward the cavern, situated to the left of the stage, just below Mademoiselle de Cardoville's box; a thrill of curiosity ran through the house.

A second roar, deeper and more sonorous, and apparently expressive of more irritation than the first, now rose from the cave, the mouth of which was half hidden by artificial brambles, made so as to be easily put on one side. At this sound, the Englishman stood up in his little box, leaned half over the front, and began to rub his hands with great energy; then, remaining perfectly motionless, he fixed his large, green, glittering eyes on the mouth of the cavern.

At these ferocious howlings, Djalma also had started, notwithstanding the frenzy of love, hate, and jealousy to which he was a prey. The sight of this forest and the roarings of the panther filled him with deep emotion, for they recalled the remembrance of his country and of those great hunts which, like war, have their own terrible excitement. Had he suddenly heard the horns and gongs of his father's army sounding to the charge, he could not have been transported with more savage ardor. And now deep growls, like distant thunder, almost drowned the roar of the panther. The lion and tiger, *Judas* and *Cain*, answered her from their dens at the back of the stage. On this frightful concert, with which his ears had been familiar in the midst of the solitudes of India, when he lay encamped, for the purposes of the chase or of war, Djalma's blood boiled in his veins. His eyes sparkled with a wild ardor. Leaning a little forward, with both hands pressed on the front of the box, his whole body trembled with a convulsive shudder. The audience, the theater, Adrienne herself, no longer existed for him; he was in a forest of his own lands, tracking the tiger.

Then there mingled with his beauty so intrepid and ferocious an

expression, that Rose-Pompon looked at him with a sort of terror and passionate admiration. For the first time in her life, perhaps, her pretty blue eyes, generally so gay and mischievous, expressed a serious emotion.



She could not explain what she felt; but her heart seemed tightened, and beat violently, as though some calamity were at hand.

Yielding to a movement of involuntary fear, she seized Djalma by the arm and said to him :

"Do not stare so into that cavern; you frighten me."

Djalma did not hear what she said.

"Here he is! here he is!" murmured the crowd, almost with one voice, as Morok appeared at the back of the stage.

Dressed as we have described, Morok now carried in addition a bow and a long quiver full of arrows. He slowly descended the line of painted rocks, which came sloping down toward the center of the stage. From time to time, he stopped as if to listen, and appeared to advance with caution. Looking from one side to the other, his eyes involuntarily encountered the large, green eyes of the Englishman, whose box was close to the cavern. Instantly the lion-tamer's countenance was contracted in so frightful a manner that Madame Morinval, who was examining him closely with the aid of an excellent glass, said hastily to Adrienne:

"My dear, the man is afraid. Some misfortune will happen."

"How can accidents happen," said Adrienne, with a sardonic smile, "in the midst of this brilliant crowd, so well dressed and full of animation! Misfortunes here, this evening! why, dear Julia, you do not think it. It is in darkness and solitude that misfortunes come — never in the midst of a joyous crowd, and in all this blaze of light."

"Good gracious, Adrienne! take care!" cried the marchioness, unable to repress an exclamation of alarm, and seizing her arm, as if to draw her closer: "do you not see it?"

And with a trembling hand, she pointed to the cavern's mouth. Adrienne hastily bent forward and looked in that direction.

"Take care! do not lean so forward!" exclaimed Madame Morinval.

"Your terrors are nonsensical, my dear," said the marquis to his wife. "The panther is securely chained; and even were it to break its chain (which is impossible), we are here beyond its reach."

A long murmur of trembling curiosity here ran through the house, and every eye was intently fixed on the cavern. From amongst the artificial brambles, which she abruptly pushed aside with her broad chest, the black panther suddenly appeared. Twice she stretched forth her flat head, illumined by yellow, flaming eyes; then, half opening her blood-red jaws, she uttered another roar, and exhibited two rows of formidable fangs. A double iron chain and a collar, also of iron, painted black, blended with the ebon shades of her hide and with the darkness of the cavern. The illusion was complete, and the terrible animal seemed to be at liberty in her den.

"Ladies," said the marquis suddenly, "look at those Indians. Their emotion makes them superb."

In fact, the sight of the panther had raised the wild ardor of Djalma

to its utmost pitch. His eyes sparkled in their pearly orbits like two black diamonds: his upper lip was curled convulsively with an expression of animal ferocity, as if he were in a violent paroxysm of rage.

Faringhea, now leaning on the front of the box, was also greatly excited by reason of a strange coincidence.

"That black panther, of so rare a breed," thought he, "which I see here at Paris, upon a stage, must be the very one that the Malay"—the Strangler who had tattooed Djalma at Java during his sleep—"took quite young from his den, and sold to a European captain. Bowanee's power is everywhere!" added the Strangler, in his sanguinary superstition.

"Do you not think," resumed the marquis, addressing Adrienne, "that those Indians are really splendid in their present attitude?"

"Perhaps they may have seen such a hunt in their own country," said Adrienne, as if she would recall and brave the most cruel remembrances.

"Adrienne," said the marchioness suddenly, in an agitated voice, "the lion-tamer has now come nearer; is not his countenance fearful to look at?—I tell you, he is afraid."

"In truth," observed the marquis, this time very seriously, "he is dreadfully pale, and seems to grow worse every minute, the nearer he approaches this side. It is said that, were he to lose his presence of mind for a single moment, he would run the greatest danger."

"Oh! it would be horrible!" cried the marchioness, addressing Adrienne, "if he were wounded—there—under our eyes!"

"Every wound does not kill," replied her friend, with an accent of such cold indifference that the marchioness looked at her with surprise, and said to her:

"My dear girl, what you say there is cruel!"

"It is the air of the place that acts on me," answered Adrienne, with an icy smile.

"Look! look! the lion-tamer is about to shoot his arrow at the panther," said the marquis suddenly "No doubt he will next perform the hand-to-hand grapple."

Morok was at this moment in front of the stage, but he had yet to traverse its entire breadth to reach the cavern's mouth. He stopped an instant, adjusted an arrow to the string, knelt down behind a mass of rock, took deliberate aim—and then the arrow hissed across the stage, and was lost in the depths of the cavern, into which the panther had retired, after showing for a moment her threatening head to the audience.

Hardly had the arrow disappeared, than *Death*, purposely irritated

by Goliath, who was invisible, sent forth a howl of rage, as if she had been really wounded; Morok's actions became so expressive, he evinced so naturally his joy at having hit the wild beast that a tempest of applause burst from every quarter of the house. Then, throwing away his bow, he drew a dagger from his girdle, took it between his teeth, and began to crawl forward on hands and knees, as though he meant to surprise the wounded panther in his den. To render the illusion perfect, *Death*, again excited by Goliath, who struck him with an iron bar, sent forth frightful howlings from the depths of the cavern.

The gloomy aspect of the forest, only half lighted with a reddish glare, was so effective, the howlings of the panther were so furious, the gestures, attitude, and countenance of Morok were so expressive of terror that the audience, attentive and trembling, now maintained a profound silence. Every one held his breath, and a kind of shudder came over the spectators, as though they expected some horrible event.

What gave such a fearful air of truth to the pantomime of Morok was that, as he approached the cavern step by step, he approached also the Englishman's box. In spite of himself, the lion-tamer, fascinated by terror, could not take his eyes from the large green eyes of this man, and it seemed as if every one of the abrupt movements which he made in crawling along was produced by a species of magnetic attraction caused by the fixed gaze of the fatal wagerer. Therefore, the nearer Morok approached the more ghastly and livid he became. At sight of this pantomime, which was no longer acting, but the real expression of intense fear, the deep and trembling silence which had reigned in the theater was once more interrupted by acclamations, with which were mingled the roarings of the panther and the distant growls of the lion and tiger.

The Englishman leaned almost out of his box, with a frightful sardonic smile on his lip, and with his large eyes still fixed, panted for breath. The perspiration ran down his bald, red forehead as if he had really expended an incredible amount of magnetic power in attracting Morok, whom he now saw close to the cavern entrance.

The moment was decisive. Crouching down with his dagger in his hand, following with eye and gesture *Death's* every movement, who, roaring furiously and opening wide her enormous jaws, seemed determined to guard the entrance of her den, Morok waited for the moment to rush upon her. There is such fascination in danger that Adrienne shared, in spite of herself, the feeling of painful curiosity mixed with terror that thrilled through all the spectators. Leaning forward like the marchioness, and gazing upon this scene of fearful interest, the lady

still held mechanically in her hand the Indian bouquet preserved since the morning.

Suddenly Morok raised a wild shout as he rushed toward *Death*, who answered this exclamation by a dreadful roar, and threw herself upon her master with so much fury that Adrienne, in alarm, believing the man lost, drew herself back and covered her face with her hands.

Her flowers slipped from her grasp, and, falling upon the stage, rolled into the cavern in which Morok was struggling with the panther.

Quick as lightning, supple and agile as a tiger, yielding to the intoxication of his love and to the wild ardor excited in him by the roaring of the panther, Djalma sprang at one bound upon the stage, drew his dagger, and rushed into the cavern to recover Adrienne's nosegay. At that instant Morok, being wounded, uttered a dreadful cry for help; the panther, rendered still more furious at sight of Djalma, made the most desperate efforts to break her chain. Unable to succeed in doing so, she rose upon her hind legs, in order to seize Djalma, then within reach of her sharp claws. It was only by bending down his head, throwing himself on his knees, and twice plunging his dagger into her belly with the rapidity of lightning that Djalma escaped certain death. The panther gave a howl, and fell with her whole weight upon the prince. For a second, during which lasted her terrible agony, nothing was seen but a confused and convulsive mass of black limbs and white garments stained with blood; and then Djalma rose, pale, bleeding, for he was wounded; and standing erect, his eye flashing with savage pride, his foot on the body of the panther, he held in his hand Adrienne's bouquet, and cast toward her a glance which told the intensity of his love.

Then only did Adrienne feel her strength fail her; for only super-human courage had enabled her to watch all the terrible incidents of the struggle.

. . .

END OF VOLUME II.

